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FINDING THE COMRADE GOD

Finding the Comrade God

The Essentials of a Soldierly Faith

G. WALTER FISKE

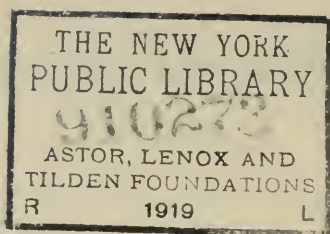
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TO MY FRIEND

HOWARD TUXBURY SANDS

A Business Man of Sterling Character

A Christian Whose Soldierly Faith

Is the Inspiration of All His Comrades

KEEP HEART, O COMRADE! GOD MAY BE DELAYED
BY EVIL, BUT HE SUFFERS NO DEFEAT.
GOD IS NOT FOILED; THE DRIFT OF THE WORLD WILL
IS STRONGER THAN ALL WRONG.

—*Whitman*

PREFACE

RELIGION MUST BE A DISCOVERY

Religion to be an achievement must first be a discovery. This book is the result of a quest, conducted by the author a few months ago with a choice company of business men in a suburb of Boston. Through the medium of a lecture-discussion course, under the general subject, "Religion for a World at War," the men of the united churches of Melrose for twelve weeks endeavored to analyze the prime factors of religion, the essentials of a soldierly faith. The studies then worked out with these men, and informally presented, are here offered for the use of similar groups of earnest men elsewhere.

It is the writer's conviction that all the essential elements of the Christian faith are non-sectarian; and that the *Church that is to be* will emphasize only the great simple truths of the Gospel of the Incarnation, the good news of a Comrade God in life, the common possession of all Christians. Sectarian ideas have been rigidly avoided. Illustrative material has been gathered as far as possible from the religious experience of current life, in order that the book may more definitely meet the needs of men in the great world struggle.

This is a textbook for men in the prime factors of religion. The sevenfold division of each chapter, with biblical material connected with each section, makes it

PREFACE

convenient to use the book privately in daily devotional study, as well as in Bible classes of men. Suggestive questions based mainly on the text are given at the end of each chapter, to guide class discussion or to stimulate thought in private study.

No bibliography is appended to these chapters, but certain recent volumes to which the author feels particularly indebted are here recommended for supplementary reading. In suggesting them, the author wishes to express his sincere appreciation for the insights and inspirations which these volumes have given him: King, "Fundamental Questions"; Palmer, "The Drift Toward Religion"; Illingworth, "Divine Immanence"; McConnell, "The Diviner Immanence"; Hyde, "The Gospel of Good Will"; Lyman, "The Experience of God in Modern Life"; Hanky, "A Student in Arms," and "The Church and the Man"; Murray, "Faith, War, and Policy"; Eddy, "Suffering and the War," and "With Our Soldiers in France"; Bosworth, "The Christian Witness in War"; the "Atlantic Papers": "The War and the Spirit of Youth"; Williams, "Shall We Understand the Bible?"; and particularly Dr. Fosdick's four volumes, "The Challenge of the Present Crisis," "The Assurance of Immortality," "The Meaning of Prayer," and "The Meaning of Faith."

In presenting these studies of religious experience, the author gratefully remembers the stimulating comradeship of that remarkably alert group of men in Melrose, whose keen questions and unflagging interest were a constant challenge to him. Without their inspiration, encouragement, and sympathetic response the book would never have been written.

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CHAPTER I

DISCOVERING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Our Need of Religion with Power

Men despise a weak religion which has no moral challenge in it. They are bored by creedal disputes, and smile at a religion of mere millinery. A religion of comforting platitudes they are quite likely to leave to the women and children. But a religion with power gets men. It grips them because they know they need it. No other kind seems worth a man's while. When they see religion doing things, they open their eyes in reverent respect; but when it contents itself with harking back to its past glories, they either fall asleep or think of other things, the big things of today which red-blooded men are doing. The use of power has great fascination for mature men. The problem of the modern man is the generation and direction of power. He is in the stress of vast responsibilities, and the greater the stress, the more he welcomes a faith which has power in it, a religion which can enlarge his working capacity, develop his personality, and help him live the victorious life.

The idea that the Creator did his work of creation in six days, and has rested ever since, fails to satisfy men who toil. Rest is not their ideal, if they are good workmen and not mere time-servers. Jesus' truer teaching, "My Father worketh until now and I work," with its vision of a God who continually creates, who is the personal force, the eternal Energy of the universe, challenges

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men's respect. In their highest moods, men not only want God's help; they want to work with God, in a splendid comradeship of power. Their souls long for a co-working God. When they discover that God is the great Efficient Good Will, eternally working, with the benevolent purpose to make a world of friendly workmen out of this foolishly selfish world, it appeals to all their noblest idealism to become recruits in such a mighty service, to be comrades with a working God, who strives to make a better world.

The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.—Isa. 40:28-31.

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.—John 5:17.

The Power of Vital Belief in God

“God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”—Matt. 22:32.

The unsatisfied atheist who wrote, “The Great Companion is dead,” was unnerved and saddened by his own pessimism. Life power leaves the heart of the man who comes to feel that God no longer lives for him. In the

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days when the great Russian, Tolstoi, had lost his faith in God, he tells us he was so afraid of suicide he dared not keep a rope in the house, and gave up hunting and the use of fire-arms. "I only lived," he writes in his "Confession," "at those times when I believed in God." And as his grip on faith returned, "I need only to be aware of God to live; I need only to forget him or disbelieve in him to die. To know God and to live is one and the same thing. . . . And the light did not again abandon me. I returned to belief in that Will which produced me and desires something of me."¹

Surely in this age of mighty tasks, when nations are conserving all their resources, mobilizing all their manpower, and reorganizing their operations and efficiency methods, it is time for us to get the maximum power out of our religion. To neglect this mighty source of power would be the biggest waste of all. A splendid young French soldier, Leo Latil, wrote home to his family, "Do not pray that I may be spared suffering. Pray rather that I may be able to bear it, and that the courage I long for may be given me."² Another French soldier, Bernard Lavergne, whose religion evidently was a very real thing, wrote thus to his family: "Tonight we leave for the trenches. Tonight I shall be watching over you, rifle in hand. *You know who is watching over me.*"³ Religion is for those who fight, for those who dare great dangers, who venture upon vast enterprises, who undertake heroic labors. In religion, that is, in the life which works with the Comrade God, men multiply their strength. The

¹ "Life of Tolstoi," by Maude, V. I, p. 418.

² "The War and the Spirit of Youth," p. 24.

³ *Ibid*, p. 58.

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philosopher William James, of Harvard, testified: "Every sort of energy and endurance, of courage and capacity for handling life's evils, is set free in those who have religious faith. For this reason, religion will drive irreligion to the wall."⁴ Thinking men today instinctively believe this, and in their sense of need they are more and more earnestly seeking the power of the presence of God. The law of the indestructibility of energy leads them back to the great reservoir of power in God Almighty. There they long to renew their strength, to mount up colossal difficulties with wings as eagles, to run under heavy strain, to walk with heavy burdens, yet to live the unwearied life. Professor Walter Rauschenbusch declares, "Our moral efficiency depends on our religious faith. The force of will, of courage, of self-sacrifice liberated by a living religious faith is so incalculable, so invincible, that nothing is impossible when that power enters the field."⁵

And Jesus looking upon them said to them,
With men this is impossible; but with God all
things are possible.—Matt. 19:26.

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power
is made perfect in weakness.—II Cor. 12:9.

If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impos-
sible unto you.—Matt. 17:20.

Our Need of an Unobtrusive God

Oh that I knew where I might find him!
That I might come even to his seat!
I would set my cause in order before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.

⁴ Quoted by Prof. E. W. Lyman, in "The Experience of God in Modern Life," p. 70.

⁵ "Christianizing the Social Order," p. 41.

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I would know the words which he would answer me,

And understand what he would say unto me. . . .

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;

And backward, but I cannot perceive him;

On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him;

He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.

—Job 23:3-5, 8, 9.

After all, it is fortunate that “no man hath beheld God at any time” (I John 4:12). It is foolish for a man to say, “I will not believe in any God I cannot see.” On the contrary, we could not worship a visible God. A God small enough to come within our narrow range of vision would be too limited a God. He would soon satisfy our curiosity and cease to command our awe, our reverential worship. But if mortal eyes should be able to behold infinite power, they could not stand the sight of it. As the glare of daylight dazed and blinded Captain Straight, of Canada, after his five months of solitary confinement in a subterranean German dungeon, and felled him to the ground in utter weakness, so, very likely, God’s visible presence would overcome our human faculties.

“This unobtrusiveness of God,” says President Henry C. King, “seems to be necessary to our spiritual training.”⁶ Otherwise we should no longer really be free to make moral choices and develop character. The right would be too obvious for choice. God’s will would fetter ours. There could be no human freedom. A moral world demands a probation time for human wills to deliberate

⁶ “Fundamental Questions,” p. 92.

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freely, for individuality to grow in the midst of moral alternatives. The eagle forces the eaglet to fly alone; so a father wisely accustoms his growing boy to make his own independent choices, with a limited amount of guidance. *Thus the invisible God unobtrusively keeps in the shadow, lest he cripple our freedom and paralyze our faith.*

"Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own." We must learn to walk by faith, not by sight. We need God's help, but not his domination of our life. He is no overbearing tyrant, with Hohenzollern officialism killing our initiative with omnipresent *verboten* signs, and effectively dictating even the common details of our life. To do this would be to stultify and weaken character and demoralize it. God knows better. He gives his children democratic freedom, opportunity for real initiative, moral elbow-room, by keeping his overpowering presence veiled. Let us not be sorry that we must dare the climbing way of adventurous faith. Let us be thankful an unobtrusive God lets us walk by faith and not by sight.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.—John 4:23, 24.

Our Secular Uses of Faith

Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.—Heb. 11:1.

The proving of your faith worketh patience.—James 1:3.

In faith ye stand fast.—II Cor. 1:24.

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As a matter of fact, this seeing the invisible through faith is an everyday commonplace. If faith is a sixth sense, a spiritual sense, by which the eye of the soul sees what the eye of the body cannot—then the act of faith is our everyday habit. We take the world on trust and live our common life by faith. We cross every bridge on faith in its builder. We make every investment with faith in human good will. We plant our fields with faith in the laws of nature. We judge the invisible character of a stranger by the visible face and its limited expressions. All natural forces are unseen. The motion of the earth, the vibrations of the ether, the current of electricity, the air pressure all about us, make little or no report through our senses. But we believe in them all just the same. "I accept the universe," said the pedantic Arnold. "'Gad, he'd better!" said the blunt Carlyle.

We cannot see or hear or feel the earth move, but we go to sleep at night without worrying as to whether the morning will find us in darkness, with the earth on a centrifugal strike. We never saw the ether or heard it vibrate, yet we allow its invisible waves to carry our wireless messages over land and sea today, and trust that it will do so a year from today. In this confident faith we train 10,000 young men in a single year for the radio-service of our American Navy. Our faith in that invisible wizard, electricity, increases constantly the more we trust its power and its light. Our faith in the conservative inertia of the air's pressure enters into countless calculations on which our daily routine is based. We use all of these forces, though we sense none of them. We simply have faith in them, that is all; but that is quite enough for all practical purposes.

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To ridicule faith is the folly of a vacant mind. The man who claims he does not believe in anything he cannot see, is talking plain nonsense. He is superficial. He ought to know he uses faith constantly. In his secular life he is always walking by faith. It is the nature of all power to be veiled and to make demands upon our faith sense. Naked power would be as intolerable as a visible God. Possibly the forces in life are invisible because they are but the vital functions of the invisible God of all power. Now common sense should tell us that it is just as reasonable to live by faith *in an invisible God*, as to live by faith *in invisible forces*. It would be irrational to have the courage of faith in all else but religion, and then to deny faith's province there. The human spirit naturally trusts the invisible forces of life. It is natural and reasonable for us to trust the great Efficient Good Will, who is at the heart of all life.

How God Reveals Himself to Men

We are apt to forget that all persons are invisible. We peer into human faces and sometimes see very little of personality there. Some faces make excellent masks. Others, as Emerson says, are "like Geneva watches with crystal faces, which reveal the whole movement." In any case the human body conceals the spirit far more than it reveals it. We may see a man daily for years, and still feel that we do not know him, we have caught so few glimpses of his spirit. "He doesn't open up to us," we say. Stingy persons are self-contained. They are selfish in their friendships; too sparing of their vitality. Generous souls are life-sharers. They reveal their inner life

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and character to their friends, and this is what makes friendship holy and helpful, for the truest gift one can give is himself. We may learn much and guess more about our friend's invisible character, as we watch his conduct; but only through his self-revelation can we really know him.

The Comrade God is no exception to this rule of personality. As he reveals himself we can discern him, if we use our natural function of faith; though he has to be less obtrusive than our other friends, his infinite Spirit veiled with a heavier veil than the human body. God's great self-revelations are four. His Spirit of Good Will reveals itself in nature, in the trends of human history, in human experience and character, and in the unique life of Jesus Christ. These last three are partly combined and reported in the Bible, the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures. The study of religion is the quest for God in the Incarnation: Religion finds the Efficient Good Will in the unfolding life of nature, which in some true sense is his body. Religion discerns God's influence in the cyclic progress of human history, through which he works his will. Religion discovers God's immanent presence in our human experience and in the sublime characters who seem best able to share his Spirit. And supremely, religion discovers God's character perfectly revealed in the "Crystal Christ." It is the purpose of this book to trace in a humble way the outline of this fourfold quest of the religion of the Incarnation.

All through the centuries God has tried to reveal himself to men, without breaking down his reserve or forcing his presence upon human senses, and thus endangering human freedom. The highest product of the wonder-

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ful process of evolution was *a human consciousness capable of discerning God*. A discerning faith is the crown of God's continuous creation. During the groping early centuries most men were in the dark spiritually, but a few who had won the sense of faith were called *seers*. They were called prophets (from the Greek, "to speak for"), because they spoke for God to men. They were called seers because with the inner vision they could perceive God's presence, and with their inner ear synchronized to the vibrations of his quiet messages, they could hear his voice, and then declare, "Thus saith the Lord." We do not have to believe that God used vocal cords in speaking to these ancient prophets. Such faith is all too apt to breed unbelief in our power to hear him speak to us today. Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, and their noble company, were the spiritual pioneers in the greatest movement in human history, beside which the political movements of kings and warriors were relatively insignificant. But to say that God ceased speaking when the Hebrew prophets died, is to claim Hebrew to be the sole language of heaven! God has never been dumb. The only trouble is, men have been deaf. He speaks to every soul whose spiritual senses are alive to his presence, now and always.

One of the best illustrations of this in the Bible is the story of the way God revealed himself to the prophet Elijah in a terrific thunderstorm on Mt. Sinai, when Elijah had fled into the wilderness to escape the furious vengeance of the wicked queen Jezebel, one of the most evil women of history. Elijah had shown great heroism. He had dared to denounce King Ahab for his sins. He had dared to champion the cause of Jehovah alone,

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before an unfriendly people, and in a test of faith with many fanatical prophets of Baal. He won his single-handed combat. God's power was revealed to His people, in the greatest crisis in Hebrew history, when monotheism had all but died out in Israel. Then the prophet, in excess of zeal, killed the heathen prophets and incurred the wrath of their sponsor, Queen Jezebel. After the strain was over, in his great weariness and nervous exhaustion, the man who had stood alone with God against the hosts of paganism, fled before a single angry woman—as many another man has done who preferred to face artillery. He fled post-haste to the south, many miles into the wilderness. Reaching Beersheba, the southernmost outpost of Palestine, he left his manservant there and plunged alone into the desert and the mountains beyond. The following passage tells us vividly how God met him, so many miles from home, so far from duty.

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: and after the

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earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.—I Kings 19: 9-12.

That is, God was not particularly revealing himself just then either in the wind, the earthquake, or the lightning; though he is in every wind that blows, and the force of every earthquake shock and lightning stroke is the power of nature's God, none other. Sometimes it takes earthquake and thunder to shock our deaf natures into the mood to listen to our God. By this time Elijah had forgotten Jezebel and was ready to listen to Jehovah, whispering to his heart:

And after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.—I Kings 19: 12-16.

And so Elijah's crisis was passed. His faith saved him.

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The role of a slacker was a strange one for this grand old hero, and he quickly got over it. Over the top he went again, pell mell into the seething politics of his time, making and unmaking kings, and leading back his fickle people to the worship of their fathers' God.

Our Awareness of God in Crisis Times

Yes, God can and does reveal himself to the hearts of willing men who have the faith sense to discern him. In crisis times of human history there are many who thus become aware of God. The entire reasonableness of this idea, still strange to many, was impressed upon the English-speaking world when so rationalistic a thinker as H. G. Wells, of England, accepted it and began to teach it. In his book, "God the Invisible King," he puts great stress upon the fact that God can and does make himself known to human lives at times of special need and responsiveness. "Modern religion," he writes, "bases its knowledge of God and its account of God entirely upon experience. It has encountered God. It does not argue about God; it relates. . . . Suddenly, in a little while, in his own time, God comes. This cardinal experience is an undoubting, immediate sense of God."

There can be no question that in these war-time days, under the stress of awful crises, many men, like Mr. Wells, not especially pious heretofore, are finding a new and vivid experience of God. It is not that God is any nearer, but men are less oblivious to his presence. In days of materialistic prosperity, we easily forget God. But now the day of supreme need is upon the world, and among all nations men are becoming aware of him. Just

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as Raymond Robins, lost in the Arctic snows of Alaska, finds the whole course of his life changed because, alone there among the mountains, he suddenly becomes aware of God and gets a message for his life which makes him ever after a consecrated man, a modern prophet of spiritual insight and great personal power; so tonight, in the trenches, at the lonely listening post, or wounded in no-man's-land, the soldiers are having time to think, and the world of the spirit is speaking to them, quietly, but more effectively than the world of the senses, even amidst the crashing thunder of the guns. They are encountering God. And discovering his reality is reorganizing their life. Said an American college student, now a soldier in France, "I feel somehow as if everything is all right, and God and I understand each other. I reach out and touch him and know he is there."

They that trust in Jehovah
Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but
abideth for ever.

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem,
So Jehovah is round about his people
From this time forth and for evermore.

—Psalms 125: 1, 2.

A characteristic experience is described by Donald Hanky of a young English soldier who lay all night alone, severely wounded, in no-man's-land, and made this vivid personal discovery of God's presence. "He found himself vaguely wondering about the meaning of everything. The stars seemed to make it all seem so small and petty. All this bloodshed—what was the good of it? It was all so ephemeral, so trivial, in the presence of eternity and

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infinity. It was just a strife of pygmies. Suddenly he felt terribly small and lonely, and he was so very, very weak. He was cut off from his fellowmen as surely as if he had been on a desert island, and he felt somehow as if he had got out of his element, and was launched, a tiny pygmy soul, on the sea of immensity, where he could find no bearings. . . . The stars gazed at him imperturbably. There was no sympathy there, but only cold, unseeing tolerance. Yet after all, he had the advantage of them. For all his pygmy ineffectiveness he was of finer stuff than they. At least he could feel—suffer. He had only to try to move to verify that. . . . There was that in him which was not in them unless—unless it was in everything. ‘God!’ he whispered softly, ‘God everywhere!’ Then into his tired brain came a new phrase—‘Underneath are the everlasting arms.’ He sighed contentedly, as a tired child, and the phrase went on repeating itself in his brain in a kind of chant—‘Underneath are the everlasting arms.’ ”

We should not discount such experiences because we think they are rare in ordinary life. The literature of mystical religion is full of them. We have a right to scrutinize carefully their evidence, but thinking men dare not deny their reality. In the personal letters of so careful a thinker as James Russell Lowell, we find evidence of a somewhat similar experience. He wrote, “Mr. Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking, the whole system rose up before me like a vague destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the Spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me to be full

⁷ “A Student in Arms,” First Series, p. 151.

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of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of something, I knew not what. I spoke with the clearness and calmness of a prophet."⁸

The eternal God is thy dwelling-place,
And underneath are the everlasting arms.

—Deut. 33: 27.

Working with the Comrade God

But these discoveries of God's presence in the world amount to mere selfish indulgence, unless they bring power for service into our lives. We criticize spiritualism because it claims to see visions and hear voices from the spirit world, but does nothing about it. It is an empty shell of religion, a religion without a heart; for it has no program but to look and listen, and with a purely selfish purpose at that. Likewise in the stress of these crisis days, if men discover a new sense of God's reality and his presence, it is a woeful waste of spiritual forces *unless this experience brings fresh power into their lives*, a deeper devotion to humanity in its fierce struggle with Thor and Woden. We gain this new sense of power, just as soon as we make the crowning discovery that this God-who-is-near is a Comrade-in-arms, a co-worker in all the noble purposes of our lives, and especially now in the common task of rescuing the world from the ravages of the "great blond beast."

I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and

⁸ Letters, Vol. 1, p. 75.

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he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building.—I Cor. 3:6-9.

Every worker for every righteous cause needs to have these words forever in his memory. "We are God's fellow-workers." It is a powerful motive to feel that our cause is so great and so holy that God is in the ranks of militant righteousness with us, that we are not only his instruments, to help in the accomplishment of his purpose, but comrades with him in a mutual service, with him, our Comrade God. We need to fortify our faith that God, the great Efficient Good Will, is taking a hand in this vast world movement, in the vortex of which we now find ourselves. To this end, we study in the next chapter the question of God's share in the making of history. Meanwhile let us find a challenge to a steadier faith in the calm confidence of these words of Dr. Edward I. Bosworth: "God is forcing the world forward, and we ought to be alive to God in the glad recognition of and participation in this forward movement. It is inconceivable that God, whose life and energy penetrate and vitalize all being, should have nothing whatsoever to do with such an upheaval of world civilization. . . . There are certain things taking place on a large scale that those who are alive to God must see."⁹

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why does a religion with power appeal to men? What other characteristics do you look for in your religion?

⁹ *The North American Student*, October, 1917, p. 5.

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Do you wish you could see God? Why is it far better that God is an unobtrusive Spirit?

Explain what it means to think of faith as a sixth sense. In what practical ways are we constantly using this faith-sense in our common life? How did you come to have faith in electricity and other invisible forces? Is it just as reasonable to live by faith in the invisible God? What has faith to do with moral courage?

Can you really see a human personality? How do persons reveal themselves? In what four chief ways does the unseen God reveal himself? What is a "seer?" How do you think Elijah heard God's voice on Mt. Horeb?

What do you think Mr. Wells means by his expression, "encountering God"? When Raymond Robins met God in Alaska, how did it change his life? Have you ever, at crisis times, become suddenly aware of God? What made God seem real to you then?

Can you think of God as near at hand? Explain the great thought of a Comrade God which Paul gives us in his words, "We are God's fellow-workers."

CHAPTER II

DISCOVERING GOD'S LEADERSHIP IN HUMAN LIFE AND HISTORY

After convincing ourselves of the presence of God in the midst of our world, two earnest questions come to us. Can we trust God's help in our personal life? Can we believe he is guiding the course of history? The latter question will claim our attention through most of this chapter. The former will here be briefly considered, and will recur again in later chapters.

God's Help in Personal Experience

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
From whence shall my help come?
My help cometh from Jehovah,
Who made heaven and earth.

—Psalm 121:1, 2.

A genuinely religious life must be a comradeship between divine and human spirits. Most religions assume that there can be personal relations between God and men. Jesus made this the first axiom of his own faith. Whether working as a carpenter at the bench, speaking as a public teacher in the synagogues, healing disease as a good physician, or suffering a lingering death on the Roman cross, Jesus frankly acknowledged his dependence upon God. He never seemed quite to forget his heavenly

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Father ; and God always seemed to be helping him. After long nerve-taxing days of sympathetic service of all kinds of people, his friends would see him quietly slipping away from the crowd to be alone for awhile with God. They knew that God helped him, that he gave him rest and refreshment of spirit and new strength for his work. They knew he lived his life in God's conscious presence.

As long as men think of God only as a king, reigning on an august throne in some far distant world of stranger spirits, communicating with the world of men only by means of ministering angels, this faith in God's personal help is quite unreal. It is difficult to believe it possible at all. It seems unreasonable, unlikely, if not impossible. But as soon as the full meaning of God's *presence* dawns upon our minds, it puts a different aspect on the matter. We begin to see reality in the significant words of Paul, "In him we live and move and have our being." If God is a pervasive spiritual presence, enfolding our lives in the vast ocean of his life—the real environment in which the human spirit dwells—then is it not just as reasonable to believe that we can draw from that environment health, help, and power, as do the plants from the soil? Granted a Comrade God who is near, a personal Spirit of Efficient Good Will, a pervasive presence penetrating our very atmosphere, what is more natural than to believe that he is willing and able to help us? Prayer then becomes as natural as breathing, and trust, the normal attitude of life.

The silent nearness of this pervasive presence seems to make many men as oblivious to him as the fish doubtless are to the water, or the birds to the air, the medium in which they live. The very simplicity of our close relationship with God baffles us sometimes, and we conjure

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up doubts because the truth seems too easy. Unless truth is subtle and inscrutable, some folks distrust it. So some philosophers have woven a tangled web, involving human freedom and divine providence, which puzzles more than it reveals. The insight of the great poets is clearer than that of these philosophers. The mystery is made simple in these lines of Sidney Lanier, as he describes his own experience of resting in and trusting the greatness of God:

“Oh, what is abroad in the marsh and the terminal sea?
Somehow my soul seems suddenly free
From the weighing of fate and the sad discussion of sin,
By the length and the breadth and the sweep of the
marshes of Glynn.

Ye marshes, how candid and simple and nothing-with-
holding and free
Ye publish yourselves to the sky and offer yourselves to
the sea!
Tolerant plains, that suffer the sea and the rains and the
sun,
Ye spread and span like the catholic man who hath
mightily won
God out of knowledge and good out of infinite pain,
And sight out of blindness and purity out of a stain.

As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:
I will fly in the greatness of God, as the marsh-hen flies
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh
and the skies:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod,
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God:

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Oh, like to the greatness of God is the greatness within
The range of the marshes, the liberal marshes of Glynn.”¹

Clearly, God has granted great powers to us men. The human consciousness, the climax of the vast evolution, has won colossal triumphs. To be sure, God has set rather rigid limits, in the constitution of our finite nature, which we may not pass and live. But within these physical and psychical limits, human freedom is broad and untrammelled, “In the freedom that fills all the space ’twixt the marsh and the skies.” Yet with all our ambitious soaring, we never escape from the living God. He is our environment. We are subject to his kindly laws. We still must “fly in the greatness of God.” Surely if we “heartily lay us a-hold on the greatness of God,” his Good Will is our efficient and immediate help, his infinite sources of strength are at our elbow. The only uncertainty in this comradeship is the measure of our faith which receives his co-working power.

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do
change,
And though the mountains be shaken into the
heart of the seas;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
Though the mountains tremble with the swelling
thereof.
There is a river, the streams whereof make glad
the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most
High.

¹ “The Marshes of Glynn.”

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God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:

God will help her, and that right early.

The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved:

He uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Jehovah of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge.

—Psalm 46: 1-7.

Does God Share in the Making of History?

The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof;

The world, and they that dwell therein.

—Psalm 24: 1.

"Dead are all the gods," cried Nietzsche, "now let the Superman live!" This, in spite of the pious camouflage of the Kaiser, is the spirit of Prussianism. With its inhuman atrocities, its practical atheism, it throws its challenge in the face of God. It acknowledges for itself no moral law, and proclaims only a religion of force. "Since we have the force, we have not to seek reasons," wrote Von Tannenburg in his book, "*Grossdeutschland*," published in 1911, three years before the war. The world is watching now to see the living God accept the challenge. We shall see, before long, whether the brute struggle for existence, and the survival of the mightiest, is all there is to history, or whether *right makes might*, backed by a righteous God.

Christianity very evidently assures us that God *does* have a share in the making of history. This does not mean that the life of the nations is only a mechanical puppet-show, with an invisible God pulling the wires from behind the scenes, and forcing the world to a life of con-

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tinuous slavery. God's hand in history is not the mailed fist. He is no Prussian autocrat, but a Comrade God. Within the constitutional limits set by his laws of nature, he gives us freedom—nations as well as men. There is no godless history. From the first emergence from primeval chaos to the present hour, God has been in it all; not responsible for it all, to be sure, but permissive of it all.

The great trends of human progress have evidently been according to his will, for they accord with his nature. The cross currents in the stream, and the eddies, maelstroms, and stagnant pools have been due to the conflicting wills of men. Within the scope of the freedom God has given, necessary to the moral development of the race, men and nations have used their prerogatives, even in opposition to God's will, often in open rebellion. With devilish cruelty and satanic wickedness, the brutal nations that are slow in getting civilized have again and again wreaked their vengeance upon the world, through the barbarous mediums of war and slavery, social injustice and civic oppression. The brute instincts have been hard to eradicate. The Christian spirit has had a hard time, and a ponderously slow task, overcoming the impulses which hark back to the jungle. These impulses are deeply rooted in human nature. Human nature can be changed. It has always been changing, else we should all be savage brutes today; but it takes centuries of moral evolution for God to work it out. We should hardly wish it otherwise, for if God had forced the issue and speeded up the process, it would have been at the cost of our freedom. Autocracy in the cosmos would have been efficient and speedy, as well as benevolent, but it would have been fatal to a free humanity. God did not compel the nations

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to be good. It would have defeated its own purpose. Moral character won by force would no longer be moral character. It would be only a servile yielding to force. When the force should be removed, the servile nature would remain. Not compulsion from without, nor untamed impulse within, but conscience, ruled by ideals, must control conduct. Yes, the hand of God is always in history, using not brute force but moral suasion, the powerful dynamic of eternal right and justice.

“Keep heart O comrade ! God may be delayed
By evil, but he suffers no defeat.
God is not foiled ; the drift of the world Will
Is stronger than all wrong.”

—*Whitman.*

The Cyclic Course of Human Progress

The above explains why human progress through the centuries has been cyclic in its character. It has not been a steady forward march. It has had too many ups and downs. But with all its ups and downs, it has been going forward, with a cyclic movement, like the progress of a wheel. That the human race has made great progress, no one questions, except people who have not read history. People who do not read or study have so short a perspective that they often see only the sporadic, downward, backward movements ; so they debate the question, “Is the world getting better or worse?” In their disappointments they see the world not going their way, so they assume it is not going God’s way, or that God has lost his grip on the helm. If they had more faith in God they would know that in the long run God wins. The relentless law

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of the harvest holds for nations and races as well as individuals: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7)—which is the scriptural way of stating a scientific law, the fundamental law of cause and effect, a law equally binding in physics and in morals.

Vast progress has unquestionably been made in human history, from the prehistoric cave-man to the Christian citizenship of today. Intellectually, socially, morally, the race has made great gains. We do well to ask what has caused this progress. Has it been due to evolutionary forces, blind cosmic forces? Has it been due to the interaction of physical and natural laws; or to an inner intelligence within these laws? Has it been due to the great men of the race, as Carlyle taught; or to mass movements of men? Has it been due to economic pressure; or to geographical location, as some specialists assert? Yes, to all of these cooperating causes, with the living God working through them all. Whatever your theory of history, this fact must be recognized: *Progress is the will of God*. Whittier was profoundly right when he wrote:

"But life shall on and upward go:
The eternal step of Progress beats
To that great anthem, calm and slow,
Which God repeats. . . .

God works in all things; all obey
His first propulsion from the night.
Wake thou and watch! the world is gray
With morning light!"

Thus declares the Christian. Whatever be the present discouragement, or the temporary defeat of the forces of

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righteousness, the Christian, with his absolute confidence in God and his certainty of the final victory, never loses his grip. There are strategic retreats, there may be serious setbacks, but there cannot be ultimate failure, for the eternal God.

Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown; this shall be no more the same; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it . . . until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.—Ezek. 21: 26, 27.

Democracy: The Great Trend of God's Will

Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.—Lev. 25: 10.

Tennyson touches a high note of faith when he declares, "I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs." But he shows not merely faith, but discernment in past history. The history of life, through its aeons of upward climbing, shows the plain purpose of God in it all. Through millions of years of patient development, through the many stages of sentient, struggling, ascending forms of life, the obvious goal, in the purpose of God, was a *self-controlled man in a self-governed state*. The more you examine the facts of evolution and of history, the greater your respect for this climax of creation, and the more profoundly you reverence the God who could set so high a goal from such low beginnings, and ultimately work out his will.

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Certain it is that the struggle of humanity for freedom and for civil rights is the great throbbing heart of history. Our most real progress has not been in wealth, resources, military forces, or national power. These are relatively superficial, and usually temporary. That has been a sham progress which has not been progress in democracy, the outcome of God's faith in humanity. Permanent human progress must be found in the common man's chance to live his life, to speak his mother tongue, to make his own home, to do his own work, and support his own family, while together they grow Christian character and enjoy an untrammelled life of moral opportunity and civil liberty. Progress was slow, of course, for many centuries, while men were learning the hard lesson of self-control and the conquest of brute impulse; but through the Christian era we may note *the oncoming strides of the democracy of God*. In the great way-marks of human progress we may see revealed this great unconquerable trend of God's will.

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof," is the slogan which for centuries has inspired this great movement. Naturally these words are most sacred to Americans, because they were cast on the Liberty Bell which first rang out the tidings of our independence. We may well take them as the true expression of the divine will for all the world of men. Even among the Hebrews, to whom these words first came, the Year of Jubilee was never fully observed. It was a dream left unfulfilled. Among all nations this longing for civil liberty remained unrealized for many centuries. The Greek republic was a farce, while four-fifths of the people were slaves. Rome was no better. There was no

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democracy; citizenship was only for the few. As late as 200 A. D., three-fourths in Rome were slaves. It is hard for us to think that human slavery lasted in England until 1833 and in our own country until 1863. The long struggle for freedom, for personal, civil, and religious liberty, has been both the pathos and the slow triumph of history. The custom of trial by jury, in early Saxon England, was a long step out of serfdom; but the first great gain for human rights was wrested from autocracy in 1215 at Runnymede, when the Magna Charta laid the solid foundation for Anglo-Saxon liberties. This charter provided that no freeman should be imprisoned, deprived of property or liberty, outlawed or exiled, tried or condemned, but by the lawful judgment of his peers; and no taxes could thereafter be levied without consent of Parliament.

Under Plantagenet rule, to be sure, there was but limited freedom, and in fact democracy was hardly made a serious experiment until 1776, when our Declaration of Independence, thanks to Thomas Jefferson, gave definite and bold expression to the claims of the common citizen. Freedom-loving France soon followed our example, and all South America soon after, at least in form. Meanwhile in England and her self-governing dependencies, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, the most genuine social democracy has been developed, though nominally under a king. The great trend is manifest in all continents. Japan adopted a free constitution like England's in 1891. Italy has long been the people's land. Portugal has been a republic since 1910 and the Chinese Republic amazed the world in 1913; and when last year the Russian revolution unseated the Romanoffs and added

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one-seventh of the world to the ranks of democracies, we thought history was making fast. Today the world map shows few dark spots now held under tyranny except in middle Europe, where the middle ages still hold sway and where Prussian arrogance still defies the most obvious trend of the centuries.

A self-controlled man in a self-governed state, this is the high objective of history. Such marvelous strides have been already made toward making this trend universal, it is hard to deny that God has been back of the movement. We find Emerson sensing this fact two generations ago, when he wrote in his "Boston Hymn":

"God said, I am tired of kings, I suffer them no more.
Up to my ear the morning brings the outrage of the poor.
Think ye I made this ball a field of havoc and war,
Where tyrants great and tyrants small might harry the
weak and poor?"

My angel—his name is *Freedom*—choose him to be your
king;

He shall cut pathways east and west, and fend you with
his wing.

I will have never a noble, no lineage counted great.

Fishers and choppers and ploughmen shall constitute a
state!"

God's Providence at Crisis Times

This story of human progress, at certain points of sharp crisis, reveals either some very dramatic coincidences or the guidance of God in crucial events. The Old Testament constantly suggests the hand of God in Hebrew history. Its ancient writers interpret history as a partner-

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ship of divine and human wills. We see God through it all. Surely the persistence and influence of that wonderful race do credit to such faith in God's leadership. We need to have all history thus interpreted, from the viewpoint of God's share in it. Usually his hand has been unobtrusive, but at crucial points we may often discover it. For instance, when Xerxes in 480 B. C., with his navy of 1,000 ships, threatened Greek civilization at the battle of Salamis, how can we account for the issue? What saved Europe from those Asiatic hordes? Themistocles with his 180 little boats surely needed divine aid, and the future welfare of the race as well demanded it. We are told so slight an occurrence as the cackling of geese once saved Rome; likewise that a certain Scotch garrison was fortunately aroused by the outcry of an invading soldier in the darkness, when merely stung by a thistle! The thistle was thereupon given a place upon the Scottish coat of arms to perpetuate the national thanksgiving. These events were no more insignificant than the sudden flight of pigeons which turned the course of Columbus on his original voyage of discovery. But just because those pigeons turned southwest, toward the Bahamas instead of Florida, Columbus was deflected from his steady due west course, and thus North America was saved from the curse of Spanish misrule.

One of the most striking stories of the hand of God in history which the Old Testament gives us is the account of the sudden retreat of Sennacherib, the powerful king of Assyria. This world conqueror, with Prussian morals and ideals, after uniform success in the north and east, had decided to annex little Palestine to his great empire. It was in the reign of King Hezekiah, a

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man of devout and worthy life. But the weakness of the Jews before such a mighty foe was apparent. The King of Assyria boastfully demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, and waited for an easy victory. His only opposition was the prayer of a frightened king and people, and the courage of the prophet Isaiah, who flung in his face the challenge of his faith in Jehovah. Apparently a sudden pestilence attacked the Assyrians and they fled in fearful panic. Contemporary records of the Assyrians confirm the fact.

Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard thee. This is the word that Jehovah hath spoken concerning him. . . . But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy raging against me. Because of thy raging against me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. . . . Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall not come unto this city, saith Jehovah. For I will defend this city to save it; for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And it came to pass that night, that the angel of Jehovah went forth, and smote in the camp of the

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Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.—II Kings 19:20, 21, 27, 28, 32-36.

The Protestant world can never forget the rescue of England in 1588 from the talons of Philip of Spain. It may have been the great crisis in the religious history of the world. It shows us that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," for little England then was weak, and had a tiny navy, while Spain was mistress of the seven seas, and the proudest monarchy in the world. The Invincible Armada, as the Spaniards called their fleet, made a seven-mile crescent as it swept up the English channel, with 180 of the biggest ships afloat. It was the most powerful navy ever yet built. There was no human possibility of defeating it. But Queen Elizabeth proclaimed the last Sunday of July a day of prayer for all England, and somehow the hand of God was with them. Although it was midsummer, two ocean storms struck the proud fleet, and the second of them scattered and wrecked scores of the Spanish men-of-war and drove the remnants of that mighty navy in the teeth of a terrible gale, to be wrecked miserably on the rocks at the far north of Scotland. Perhaps, you may say, it was a happy coincidence; but awe-struck England solemnly gave thanks to God for his wonderful help in that crucial hour.

For fifteen years God let Napoleon scourge Europe. Some social results of this scourging, though bitter and grievous at the time, were in the interest of democracy.

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It put an end to the feudal ages. But the military monarch who trusted only in brute force, regardless of the rights of men and the welfare of nations, finally met his Waterloo. His strength, however, had really been broken in the Russian campaign. In the days of his pride he had recklessly flaunted his atheism. He had ridiculed the thought of God's power in the making of history. Sarcastically he said, "God is always on the side of the heaviest battalions!"

Craftily he selected the summer time for his invasion of the wintry land of Russia. But though it was only June 24th when he crossed the frontier, with his matchless army of 600,000 seasoned veterans—then the largest invading force in history, save that of Xerxes—he arrived at Moscow September 14th, a deserted capital going up in patriotic flames. He had been repeatedly delayed by vexatious hindrances over which he had no control. An unseen hand seemed to hold him back. He was prevented from forcing the Czar to meet him in open battle, until the early Russian winter suddenly compelled him to retreat. We cannot vouch for the date, but it is reported that this prematurely early blizzard came October 13th, a month ahead of expectations. And those impalpable snow flakes, silently falling on the plains of Russia, sealed the doom of the great conqueror and rescued Europe from his cruel domination. The awful story of that French retreat is familiar history; but perhaps it is not so well known that when Napoleon, on reaching French soil once more, left behind his worn-out remnant of an army and spurred on to Paris with his body-guard, he was heard to mutter bitterly to himself, "The Almighty is too powerful for me!" Was it merely the remorseful awakening of a

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guilty conscience? Or was it a true estimate of the cause of his downfall? At any rate, from that day Napoleon was a beaten man, for he felt the eternal God was against him.

"Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record

One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word.

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne—

Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,

Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."²

Is God Now Taking a Hand in History?

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me;

Thou wilt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies,

And thy right hand will save me. —Psalm 138:7.

It is evident throughout this chapter that the writer believes that human history is not godless, but that the God of nations, whose law is social justice and whose will is human progress, has a definite and holy purpose which has been making its silent way through the mazes of history, now speedily, now slowly, but unswervingly. That holy purpose is human freedom and democracy; for the goal of creation is a self-controlled man in a self-governed state.

² Lowell, "The Present Crisis."

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The present world crisis is surely no exception. The Christian will not claim that God caused this awful war. It is all too evident that the war was willed upon the world by an ambitious, unscrupulous, perfectly prepared nation which expected speedy success. It is equally clear that the spirit which made the war possible is the spirit of selfish materialism, which is modern paganism, the spirit which among all nations is the enemy of Christian idealism. But although God could not have caused this war and be true to himself, he is surely using the scourge of the war to further his holy purpose. In spite of the awful cost of it, the world, through the medium of this war, has already made more progress in the great struggle for civil liberty than has been made since 1848. And it is likely to be true, by the time this vast struggle ends, that its tremendous speeding up of social forces will have caused such momentum of progress that the new world that-is-to-be will be more radically transformed than any of us anticipate. With the breakdown in many lands of conservative customs which have long blocked progress, the Spirit of God now has a chance.

Not only is it significant that the four remaining political tyrannies of the world, the four last Czars, are fighting against a score of free nations, but it is also to be remembered that in all nations weapons of power have been put in the hands of the common man. That is, in mobilizing and equipping such vast "man-power," the governments have created armies perhaps more powerful than themselves. After the fighting ends, these millions of citizen soldiers will have the power to determine the course of history. They will not be slow to use their power. It will certainly be a more democratic world, with a larger

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share in governing and in profit-sharing taken by the common citizen. The mutual education these men are now getting in the trenches, and the social ideals they are developing, will largely determine whether their future activities of reconstruction shall be selfish or Christian.

We see then, the present struggle is the climax of the age-long trend of history, God's own holy purpose to help all men win freedom and democracy. If this be so, there never was a holier war or a nobler cause. How closely the present struggle is linked up with the great historic movement, is eloquently stated by Mr. Lloyd George, England's prime minister, in his Glasgow speech, June 29, 1917: "Then (in the seventeenth century), Europe suffered unendurable miseries, but at the end of it humanity took a great leap forward toward the dawn. Then came the conflict of the eighteenth century, the great fight of the right of men as men, and Europe again was drenched with blood. But at the end of it the peasantry were free, and democracy became a reality. Now we are faced by the greatest and grimmest of all—liberty, equality, fraternity, not only amongst men but amongst nations; great, yea small; powerful, yea weak; exalted, yea humblest—that is the challenge which has been thrown to us. Europe is again drenched with the blood of its bravest and best, but do not forget these are the great successions of hallowed causes. They are the stations of the cross on the road to the emancipation of mankind. Let us endure as our fathers did. Every birth is an agony, and the new world is born out of the agony of the old world. My appeal to the people of this country is this—that we should continue to fight for the great goal of international right and international justice, so that *never again* shall

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brute force sit on the throne of justice, nor barbaric strength wield the scepter of right."

It is as clear as daylight now that this is the climax of the great world struggle between tyranny and democracy. The smoke and haze of the early years of the war have cleared away. If it proves to be true that the cause of human liberty is to make great progress, not only in Russia and Palestine but also in Bohemia and the other Slavic nations, and, even, if God wills, in Austria and Germany itself; and if in the nations of the Entente Alliance a new idealism shall permanently reign, with fuller appreciation of their priceless liberties; then it will hardly be questioned by reasonable men that God has been taking an active hand in the making of history.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.—Matt. 6: 10.

What Kind of a God is with the Kaiser?

Why do the nations rage,
And the peoples meditate a vain thing?

—Psalm 2: 1.

"*Gott Mit Uns*" has so long been the motto of the House of Hohenzollern that the Kaiser seems to think he has annexed the Deity to the General Staff of the German Army! After every superficial military gain he issues a royal manifesto, in which he congratulates "the German God" for his part in the "victory"! On every available occasion he piously assures his armies that "Gott" is with them. "Forward with Gott" is the slogan which he insidiously suggests as their battle-cry of victory.

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Some of us are wondering just what sort of a god this "Deutscher Gott" might be. What would be the personal character of a deity who would take orders from this crime-stained Kaiser? Who is their "Gott" and what is he like? He is certainly not like Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of sympathy, justice, and good will—yet the God of Christendom is like Jesus Christ.

The answer is rather simple. You may hear it, in brazen accents, from the leaders of German thought today. The Kaiser's "Gott" is a god of battles, a god of hosts, a mighty tribal deity that incarnates force and personifies the world-trampling spirit of colossal German conceit. He is a brutal god. He is not our Heavenly Father. He is not the God of the New Testament. He is not interested in the brotherhood of Man. His only care is for the "Superman," *der Deutscher Mann*. His only gospel is *Kultur*. His "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people" is simply "*Deutschland über Alles*." To insure the spread of this gospel, this "German Gott" sanctions all "necessary" violations of international law and other safeguards of civilized warfare. So war becomes piracy and massacre. He winks at any frightfulness which merely punishes non-Germans. He lets the Ten Commandments be revoked (for Germans), the Beatitudes be reversed, and simple human kindness become obsolete. The German mailed fist, holy as the lightning, may with impunity strike dead its victims on land or sea or in the air—men armed or unarmed, it matters not—women or defenseless children, it matters less. Hideous rape, foul murder in the dark, and even human slavery, are merely incidental in the glorious game. It is *the day*! In the name of "Gott" go forth and slay.

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What kind of a god is such a god? *There is no such person.* He is only a figment of the disordered brain of a war-mad people and a coterie of wilful war-lords, who have conjured up a deity of like passions with themselves. Pagans in all history have done the same. Thor and Woden, Jupiter and Mars, Zeus, Dagon, Bel and Moloch—the list would be a long one. A patronizing tribal god is ever the boldest work of man. Does not the modern “Gott” of Potsdam bear the closest resemblance to his ancestral forbear, the ancient Thor? It is the frank boast of certain German patriots today. Surely if you accept their testimony, he is more like Milton’s Satan than the Christian’s God.

Once a greater than the Kaiser, one whose humility matched his moral grandeur, was accosted by a pious friend in dark wartime: “Mr. Lincoln, the Lord is with us. God is surely on our side in this great conflict.” The great leader grew suddenly grave as he quietly replied, “I am less anxious, friend, to know that the Lord is on *our* side, than I am to make sure that *we are on the Lord’s side.*”

One thing is morally certain: The Lord of all the earth, the God of humanity, can never be drafted for service under the eagles of Germany or any other flag. He cannot be dragooned to back up any king’s war policy. Much less can his moral principles be trailed in the dust of the chariot wheels of a hell-bent general staff. The Eternal God will select his own place in this war. No race can monopolize him. No people can corner him. No nation can annex or naturalize him. And no monarch, however arrogant or powerful, can thwart his final justice. Ultimately his kingdom will come, his will be done.

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Where then will God be found, in this and every war? He casts in his mighty moral power with every nation that seeks to do his will, whose policy reflects his moral character. His blessing can come only to those who recognize the rights of fellowmen, whose aim is social justice and fair play, and whose methods are decently humane. The God of Eternal Pity goes with the Red Cross into every battle zone. The God of Divine Sympathy shares every Calvary with a nation which sacrifices life and treasure in a great unselfish struggle to make a better world.

Is God with us? Let the men of every nation ask it of their own consciences. But let them not dare claim it, unless they are fighting *with God* in the great age-long struggle for human freedom and human brotherhood, for a living chance for the common man, for the triumph of love, sympathy, and pity over brute force, hate, and greed, for the final victory of social justice, human kindness, and international good will.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

To what extent do you trust God's help in your personal life? In Sidney Lanier's great poem, just what did he mean by the line, "I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God?"

Do you think God really has a share in the making of history? How does the freedom of choice he has given men sometimes interfere with his purpose in history? Puncture the faithless fallacy: "Human nature can't be changed!" Why doesn't God use force in compelling history to go his way?

How do you explain the ups and downs and the slow

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progress in human history? Where do Christians get their confident faith that righteousness will in the long run triumph?

How does the long struggle for human freedom show the trend of God's will? What is the truest test of human progress? Trace the "oncoming strides of the democracy of God." How can you account for the wonderful increase in democratic government in the world, in the last generation? What's the use of kings?

Mention some striking "coincidences" which look like God's providential help in crisis times in history.

Can you see in the present world crisis a certain climax in human history? What do you think God is doing about it? What great good can you see coming out of this war? How has your faith helped you to understand the war and face it courageously?

How does the Prussian God compare with the Father-God of Jesus? What is the real test of whether God is with us?

CHAPTER III

DISCOVERING GOD IN THE LAWS OF LIFE

Nature the Beautiful Body of God

Within all the life of nature God is the soul. His Spirit is the continuous Creator and sustainer of life. The earth with its miracle of changing seasons and marvel of renewing life is his beautiful body. "Who can look on nature," asks St. Hilary in the fourth century, "and not see God?" "The wonders of the visible creation are the footprints of our Creator; himself as yet we cannot see, but we are on the road that leads to vision, when we admire him in all things that he has made." Thus spoke Gregory in the sixth century. Here we discover an almost universal belief of the human heart, that through the love of nature we may find our way to God. It is not all of religion; but for many it is the beginning of religion. In all great religions you may find it. The seers and poets, both Protestant and Catholic, agree on this doctrine. Greek and Latin classics reveal the same faith. The sacred books of India and Persia and Egypt share with us the universal touch that makes the whole world kin. Even in the dim distance of human beginnings we find the sun-myths, the star-myths, the myths of the storm, the mountains, the winds, and the rivers, reminding us that "through Nature to God" was the earliest ladder by which

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the religious spirit of humanity began to climb its way to heaven.

We cannot wonder that from time to time ancient men have worshiped the forces of nature, thinking they had groped their way to ultimate reality and power. Though in all the ages nature has led men to God, it needed the vision of a purer faith to discover within these forces, within the beautiful garment of visible life, the personal God, active as the indwelling power which directly causes every form of life.

Bless Jehovah, O my soul.

O Jehovah my God, thou art very great;

Thou art clothed with honor and majesty.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment;

Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;

Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;

Who maketh the clouds his chariot;

Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;

Who maketh winds his messengers;

Flames of fire his ministers;

Who laid the foundations of the earth,

That it should not be moved for ever.

Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a vesture;

The waters stood above the mountains.

At thy rebuke they fled;

At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away

(The mountains rose, the valleys sank down)

Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them.

Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;

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That they turn not again to cover the earth.
He sendeth forth springs into the valleys;
They run among the mountains;
They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild asses quench their thirst.
By them the birds of the heavens have their
habitation;
They sing among the branches.
He watereth the mountains from his chambers:
The earth is filled with the fruit of thy works.
He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
And herb for the service of man;
That he may bring forth food out of the earth.
—Psalm 104: 1-14.

Some of the grandest passages in the writings of the Hebrew prophets reflect this faith in the presence of God in all nature. The mind of Jesus, so sympathetic with all the natural life of the fields and the mountains, also reveals it. The great poets who have had clearest insight teach us of the indwelling God in the visible world, none perhaps more noticeably than Wordsworth. The charm and mystic spell of the beautiful English lake country where he spent his days is revealed distinctly in many of his odes and sonnets. His whole life seems to have been hallowed by a vivid, vital feeling of God's nearness. His confession of faith in the indwelling God who is the very soul of nature is most beautifully expressed in these lines:

"I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

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And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear—both what they half create,
And half perceive; well pleased to recognize
In Nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.”¹

The Lower and the Higher Nearness

Lest some should try to find in this divine immanence in nature a complete religion, it may be well to introduce here a word of caution. Not far from here lies pantheism, which denies the personality of God. We may not confine God within his visible world, though he be the soul of nature. So wonderful a worker cannot be held a prisoner within his own works. He fills and overflows them. God's identity is not lost in nature.

In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting lovingkindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer. . . . For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee.—Isa. 54:8, 10.

¹“Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey.”

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It is because he not only is within nature but transcends it, that we worship him. The man who says he finds God in the fair face of the mountains and the fields and does not need to worship him in church is taking a narrow view and finding only a phase of God's life. For such a man, Bishop Francis J. McConnell has a very clear message in "The Diviner Immanence": "The man in the fields is no doubt standing face to face with God, but is that a warrant that he can read God's face? The voices of nature are the voices of God, but is that an assurance that we understand the voices? . . . The fine flights of the poets are indeed among the great glories of human genius, but it would be a good deal of a strain on our intelligence to hold that the poets got their insight wholly from gazing on the fields. They came to the fields with certain conceptions of the meaning of life and nature, and they found in the landscapes illustration and quickening of conviction and ideal already held. The poet, insofar as he possesses real insight at all, gets it through a nearness to God of the higher kind—the nearness of inner sympathy. In bringing men to that higher nearness, Christianity plays a part which can be taken by nothing else."²

In discovering God in nature and in the laws of life we are discovering a splendid fact. It will help us better to understand our world. But let us not expect to stop here in our quest. It would not permanently satisfy a searching soul. Our Gospel of the Incarnation is a broader and higher religion than this. Modern religion, however, makes much of the fact of God in the world,

² Page 20.

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for it furnishes the living link between a devout science and a thinking faith. Let us examine it further.

True Science Essentially Devout

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,

The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him but little lower than God,

And crownest him with glory and honor . . .

O Jehovah, our Lord,

How excellent is thy name in all the earth!

—Psalm 8: 3-5, 9.

It is a familiar saying that "the undevout astronomer is mad." It is difficult to see how a scholar using the telescope in tracing the major laws of God's external universe, or the microscope in searching for his hidden laws within, can forget the spirit of reverence. Yet sheer familiarity sometimes blinds the eyes to the larger meanings of life. And we must remember that the conservative Church has again and again been foolishly inhospitable to new discoveries and is largely to blame for the opposition of early science to religion. Sometimes the scientists with their reverence for facts were really more devout than the priests who persecuted them. Many of the great pioneers in scientific discovery have truly felt what Kepler the astronomer expressed, "O God, I think thy thoughts after thee." Certainly our modern faith owes a vast debt of gratitude to the earnest toilers in the

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laboratories, who have patiently probed their way into the unknown and have investigated millions of minute facts in their relentless search for truth. The wisest of them have been the humblest. All of them have been, within their sphere, men of faith. They have never made progress except by trusting and following the hypothesis which seemed most reasonable to them. The head of that great school of applied science, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, once said, "Science is grounded in faith just as is religion. Scientific truth, like religious truth, consists of hypotheses, never wholly verified, that fit the facts more or less closely." Surely there should be no conflict between science and religion. Each needs the spirit and method of the other, without which neither can do its best work. The basis of modern religion is scientific. The highest interpretations of science are inevitably religious.

The Blessed Uniformity of Natural Law

The uniformity of nature's obedience to law used to be the rock of offence between science and religion. On this rock many a man's faith was wrecked, for the reign of law seemed to make impossible the claims of the Church. Superficial people still fear the uniformity of natural law, because it seems to them to deny God's providence, to make prayer fruitless, and almost to take away their Bible and their God. They dislike to think of the vast reaches of the universe, with the unvarying time schedule of the planets, for it shows them that they have an idea of God too small to fit the facts. The pathos of James Lane Allen's novel, "The Reign of Law" lies in the wreck

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of the college boy's adolescent faith, just because he felt obliged to accept the doctrine of evolution which he learned in the laboratory. He thought he could no longer sing the grand old hymn, "How firm a foundation." The only trouble was, his conception of God had not grown to keep pace with his scientific knowledge. Yet true science cannot harm true religion, for all truth is a splendid unity. It is all the expression of the life of God.

And of Joseph he said,
Blessed of Jehovah be his land,
For the precious things of heaven, for the dew,
And for the deep that coucheth beneath,
And for the precious things of the fruits of the
sun,
And for the precious things of the growth of
the moons,
And for the chief things of the ancient mountains,
And for the precious things of the everlasting
hills,
And for the precious things of the earth and the
fulness thereof,
And the good will of him that dwelt in the bush.
—Deut. 33:13-16a.

Second thought should convince us that it is a blessed thing that we live in a world of law. It may be unimportant to us that all the snow crystals that ever fall invariably form angles of 60 or 120 degrees. It may seem unimportant that water should always freeze at 32 degrees and boil at 212. But it is minutiae like these which go to make up a world in which trust and contentment are possible. Without such uniformity life would be chaos.

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Nature would be positively immoral without law. Worry would be the order of the day, and plans for the future would be impossible. Suppose we lived in a world of chance, in which our laws of cause and effect were not operative. Suppose we could never foretell whether grapes, figs, or thistles would develop in the vineyards; or corn, onions, or toadstools would grow upon the corn stalks; or buckeyes, acorns, or apples in the orchard? Suppose the fields which one year brought forth abundant, nourishing food to sustain life, the next season ripened only poison and killed men by the score? Suppose the fire in the locomotive boiler suddenly produced ice instead of steam; or the mild gasolene explosions in the automobile motors began to work like the deadly T. N. T.? Such a world would speedily tear itself apart by the reckless clash of lawless forces. It would travel hell-bent to perdition and return to primeval chaos. There would simply be no living in a world not under law. Our delicate human organism is uncomfortable when the temperature goes up or down a petty thirty degrees. A change of a few more degrees brings serious illness; while life itself is possible only within a very narrow range of heat and cold. We are creatures of habit. Radical changes always upset us, sudden surprises often unnerve us, and great disappointments and sorrows will even unbalance our minds. Our very constitutions demand regularity. Our minds are routinized and must have consistency in our world. The only possible moral order is the reign of law, which assures us that an effect will faithfully and always follow the same cause. It would be sheer ingratitude for us not to be thankful to God for the blessed uniformity of his natural law.

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All Natural Law the Expression of God's Life

The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.—Psalm 24:1, 2.

All natural law is God's law. When we remember that great fact, uniformity has no more terrors for us, for the reign of law becomes the rule of God. The wonderful nicety of adjustment and the perfection of function in the life of nature is a measure of the Efficient Good Will, whose intelligent purpose has produced these results. It is entirely reasonable to accept the scientist's "resident forces" and call them Almighty God. They are but his creative energy, patiently working his evolutionary purpose, through aeons and millenniums of upward development from star dust to civilized man. The whole vast process commands our reverence, for it is all divine. God has always been working in and through it all. The laws which diligent scientists have discovered in these natural processes are simply God's ways of working. They are the expressions of his life, his methods of accomplishing his purpose.

We find, then, that God is revealing himself constantly to us in the realm of law. He is incarnate in law. We may find not only his wisdom but his kindness in the beneficence of these laws he has worked out for his universe. He shows us he is a God who can be trusted. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is not a capricious tyrant, living above the law. He is a moral being, recognizing natural laws as the laws of his own nature, his own life.

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How Men Use and Control the Laws of Nature

The essence of human freedom is the power of men to project personal causes into the world of natural law. Intelligent men make physical laws their servants and compel them to do their will. To be sure, nature sets rigid limits. But men have always been beating against these set limits, like the wings of imprisoned eagles against the bars of their cage. Gravitation is a law-abiding force. It acts relentlessly and impartially. But skilful men have learned how to circumvent it. They refuse to remain its slave. They build a concrete ship which, properly handled, will not sink. They build a huge cantilever bridge, which, properly tied and balanced, will not fall. They construct a water system which makes water flow uphill and down, in spite of gravitation. They counteract gravitation by the power of high explosives, and keep 300 pounds of steel high in the air for sixteen minutes while it travels seventy miles in its man-directed orbit. They counteract gravitation by gasoline motors, and thus conquer the air as an element in which humanity may live and work and travel. The new Curtiss planes can lift two men 1,000 feet per minute against the force of gravitation. Thus personal forces transcend the limits set by simple natural forces. How is it done? Are the natural laws annulled or broken? Not at all. Men have made progress by mastering the combinations of natural laws. They have discovered how to use laws reciprocally, how to offset one law by another, how to use a higher law to overcome the limitations of a lower. It is far truer now than when Huxley said it, that "the organized and highly developed sciences and arts of the present day have endowed man

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with a command over the course of non-human nature greater than that once attributed to the magicians."

In his remarkably clear discussion of this thought, Harry Emerson Fosdick says, "The insight which takes from the heart of religion all fear of the reign of law is this: *Personality, even in ourselves, how much more in God is the master, and not merely the slave, of all law-abiding forces.* . . . This truth underlies all our modern material accomplishments. If an engineer proposed to bridge a stream, who would say to him: 'It is impossible. The laws of nature forbid hanging iron over air'? He could answer: 'I am not merely the slave of nature, but in part its master. Nature can be *used* as well as *obeyed*.' And if one insisted to the contrary, claiming that natural laws are inviolable, the engineer's reply is evident: 'The inviolability of natural laws is the beauty of them. They are trusty servants. They can be depended on. They are unwavering yesterday, today, and forever. And if you will watch, you will see me say to this force, come, and it will come; to this force, go, and it will go; and I, a person, will manipulate and utilize the law-abiding energies of nature, making infinitely varied combinations of invariable procedures, until millions of men shall cross this river on my bridge.'³

Surely there is a mine for silver,
And a place for gold which they refine.
Iron is taken out of the earth,
And copper is molten out of the stone.
Man setteth an end to darkness,
And searcheth out, to the furthest bound,
The stones of obscurity and of thick darkness. . . .

³ "The Meaning of Prayer," p. 105.

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He putteth forth his hand upon the flinty rock;
He overturneth the mountains by the roots.
He cutteth out channels among the rocks;
And his eye seeth every precious thing.
He bindeth the streams that they trickle not;
And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to
light.

—Job 28: 1-3, 9-11.

The Key to Miracle: The Interplay of Higher Laws

But we do not see the whole meaning of this process by which men have freed themselves from slavery to law by discovering and using higher laws, until we find it to be God's own method. He has not surrounded us with a barbed-wire entanglement of relentless law to make us slaves, but is spurring us on to master the law by discovering the reciprocating forces and using them for human progress. It is thus he works out his own masterful plans. "Cannot God change his own laws?" the writer was once asked at this juncture. The answer is simple. God does not need to change them. By using reciprocal forces and higher laws he can accomplish his purpose without upsetting the moral universe. If men can so readily harness natural laws and cooperate with reciprocating forces and master them, how much more surely can God do so! Constantly he makes the laws of nature his ministering spirits, and in complicated ways which we are only gradually finding out. Thus we find Dr. Fosdick giving us this fine conclusion, "Are the universal powers plastic and usable in our hands, and in God's hands stiff and rigid? The whole analogy of human experience suggests that the world is not governed by law;

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that it is governed by God according to law. He providentially utilizes, manipulates, and combines his own invariable ways of acting to serve his own eternal purposes.”⁴

Here we discover clearly the key to miracle. No man is near enough omniscience to deny that the supernatural is *possible*. Its *probability* in any given instance is just a question of evidence. We cannot think of God as helpless in the cogs of his own machinery. Surely he is free to use in every masterful way the natural forces which express his infinitely varied life. Just because he is the indwelling God at the heart of all life, he can all the more readily serve every moral purpose in his world.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.—Matt. 10: 29-31.

This means that, in the midst of law, God's Providence remains possible. When he wills, he can meet human needs, and individual human needs, as Jesus assures us. And in doing this, he breaks no law, he suspends no law, but in masterly ways he uses his vast system of laws for the good of his children.

What we understand as miracle is simply *an event whose cause is to us mysterious*. It seems to us supernatural, because we cannot understand its process; but to God it is as natural as daylight. Many of God's ways of working we have come to understand. Science has

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 108.

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discovered their regularity and has reduced them to law. But vast areas of God's activities are still in the borderland of the unknown. His higher forces are but dimly understood. What Sir George Adam Smith says about it is likely long to be true: "Science without mystery is unknown; religion without mystery would be absurd." Yet, more and more, men are unlocking the secrets of God by discovering the mysteries. Always the wonder of the miracle has been due to ignorance of the causes which produced it. So it follows, with the growth of human knowledge, that the miracles of one age are explained by the discoveries of the next, and become the commonplaces of the future. The great art of healing, transmission of the human voice long distances, seeing the invisible by penetrating Roentgen rays, the annihilation of time and space by rapid travel, the utilizing of lightning to do the will of men—all these and many more, were miracles of impossibility until recently; impossible when first dreamed of, miracles to the multitude when first accomplished, but now mere commonplaces of our life.

When in the Oberlin College chapel, two years ago, 2,000 people with separate telephone receivers heard the waves of the Pacific ocean break upon the invisible shore, 2,300 miles away, while the moving-picture film visualized the scene simultaneously before our eyes, we thought the day of miracles had not yet passed. Rather, it was the passing, for us, of that miracle. It was a miracle only in proportion to our ignorance of the causes which produced it. But our children in years to come will smile at our feeling of wonder, for they will intercept whispers which encircle the globe without wires, and very possibly may see moving pictures of reality, transmitted from a

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distant continent. We dare not say what is impossible; the impossible has been so often made real, when men have discovered the higher laws of life.

Let us see then in the miracle, when its evidence is well attested, the activity of the divine will in ways which the men of the time could not interpret. And if they still seem mysterious to us, it is because we fail to understand the higher laws by which God accomplished his purpose. The fact that the mystery of some of the miracles is explained by modern knowledge does not mean that the divine element has been taken out of them. Rather it makes it possible for us to see the divine element in the rest of life, which is far more important. Too great stress upon the miracle tends to belittle the religious value in the rest of life. We must not forget that God is in *all* life, not simply in the miracle. In the ancient days when men believed that God was far away, no wonder they welcomed any sign of his special and unwonted presence. We today believe in a God who is near. For us, all nature is in a sense divine, it is a great incarnation of God's infinite life. Every new conquest in the field of natural science is a fresh revelation of the presence of the Living God.

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—

Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
The ear of man cannot hear and the eye of man cannot see;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?"⁵

⁵ Tennyson, "The Higher Pantheism."

GOD IN THE LAWS OF LIFE

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why have men in many races worshiped the forces of nature? Why does a religion of mere nature worship not satisfy you?

Why do you think so many astronomers have been Christian men? Show how science and religion are both grounded in faith.

Does the uniformity of natural law trouble your faith? Can you imagine what sort of a world it would be, if it were only a world of chance? Why are you thankful for the "reign of law"?

What difference can you see between "resident forces" and Almighty God? How does it help you to be able to trust these laws of God's nature?

Which is more powerful, man or "nature"? Show how men in this generation have gained wonderful control over natural forces.

What is a "miracle"? Mention something which was a miracle to your grandfather which is a mere commonplace to you. Dare you deny the supernatural? Show how men work wonders by combining and offsetting natural forces with each other. If men do this, cannot God do likewise? What unexplained miracles of today do you expect will seem perfectly natural to us in the future? How does discovering God in the laws of life give you a larger and grander God?

CHAPTER IV

FINDING THE CHRIST THROUGH COMRADESHIP IN SACRIFICE

Why All the World Admires Jesus Christ

The greatest fact in history is Jesus Christ. The marvel of history is the way the humble Galilean has won the world's heart. Long since it came about that the civilized world revised its calendar, and chose to take the birth year of Jesus as the beginning of the present era, for they counted his life in Palestine the most significant fact to date from. Today, nominally at least, one-third of the world call Jesus Christ their Master, and even Moslems regard him as a mighty prophet; while an innumerable throng in other lands yield him spiritual allegiance, as the sign of his coming universal lordship. In a remarkable way Jesus has won the world's devotion. He has done this by the drawing power of his matchless character, and his revealing to the world what God is like. For he lived the human life of God. The vision of Paul in his Roman prison in A. D. 63, perhaps the most astounding prophecy in history, is steadily becoming true; though we see in his faith only the reflection of Jesus' own:

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.—John 12: 32.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore

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also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—Phil. 2:8-11.

The most godlike thing about Jesus was his spirit of vicarious sacrifice, which showed throughout his life. He was always pouring out his life for others, with not a thought of self. He was constantly sharing his life, his time, his strength, his companionship, his best wisdom, his healing power; and he crowned this sacrificial life with a sacrificial death, which shows us in intensest light the sin of men and the love of God, so vividly that men have ever since believed he died to make them good. And so it comes about, that when men suffer they come closest to the spirit of Jesus. In the fellowship of suffering they find him, particularly if their suffering is, like his, vicarious—a self-forgetful suffering for the good of others. In this world war countless men, women, and children are forced to suffer, innocently, undeservedly. In millions of cases, like Jesus himself, they choose to suffer gloriously rather than to live dishonored. They willingly suffer for the sake of a holy cause. These are the days when men and nations of men prefer sacrifice to disgraceful ease and comfort. Of countless sacrificial spirits in a score of nations, might with equal truth be said this epitaph placed over the grave of two knightly young soldiers of England:

“They went to war for the sake of peace,
And died without hate, that love might live.”

FINDING THE COMRADE GOD

How Belgium's Sacrifice Saved Europe

Perhaps the most notable instance of this vicarious sacrifice we see in the unselfish heroism of little Belgium, in August, 1914. Menaced by Germany with the most powerful invading force the world has ever seen, King Albert stood on his frontier with his heroic little army, strong only in the consciousness of a just cause. The Germans, in feverish haste to break into France, offered Belgium a most subtle bribe if she would only let them pass across her little strip of neutral territory. They promised her perfect safety, entire immunity from any attack, prompt reparation for all damages. All she must do was to break faith with France, give up her neutrality, and let the whirlwind pass. But both sides knew that the cost of her safety would be the death of her honor and the loss of her soul. It was an awful alternative. She was given only the twelve hours of a single night to make her decision.

To the everlasting glory of that plucky little nation, she defied the unprincipled tempter, and for three weeks of marvelous resistance she kept up the unequal struggle, before the forces of Prussia could burst through her defenses on their bootless drive toward Paris. Those precious three weeks saved Paris, and the liberties of Europe—but at what awful cost! Meanwhile the armies of France were mobilizing and the Kaiser was foiled. The rape of Belgium may have been the bloodiest crime since Calvary, but Belgian blood, poured out unstintedly in vicarious sacrifice, redeemed six-sevenths of France from a similar fate. And she made this sacrifice by deliberate choice, rather than let France suffer at the cost

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of Belgian immunity. This Christlike service of the wonderful little Flemish people is vividly described in Charles Sarolea's volume, "How Belgium Saved Europe," from which I quote a single burning page: "From the beginning, the war was to the Belgian people a holy war. It was a crusade of civilization against barbarism, of eternal right against brute force. So true is this, in order adequately to realize the Belgian attitude, we are compelled to illustrate our meaning by adducing one of the most mysterious conceptions of our Christian religion, the notion of vicarious sacrifice. In theological language, Belgium suffered vicariously for the sake of Europe. She bore the brunt of the struggle. She was left to the tender mercies of the invaders. She allowed herself to become a battlefield in order that France might be free from becoming a shambles. She had to have her beautiful capital violated in order that the French capital might remain inviolate. She had to submit to vandalism, in order that humanity elsewhere might be vindicated. Belgium will have lost everything. The material damage, the destruction of thousands of cities and villages, the total collapse of industry and trade, are incalculable. The damage to the monuments, sacred to art and religion, is irreparable. The sufferings inflicted upon millions of people baffle imagination. But the moral and spiritual gain is equally inestimable. Belgium will have proved to all the world her determination and right to exist as a free nation. She will have earned the sympathy and admiration of the whole world. She will have left an inspiring example to posterity. *She has lost everything, but she has saved her own soul; and she has saved the liberties of Europe.*"

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For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate.—Isa. 62: 1-4.

The Soldier's Experience of Vicarious Sacrifice

Who shall say that Belgium's rediscovery of Christ has not been due to this heroic loyalty to the spirit of his sacrifice? Certain it is that the Belgians, pleasure-loving and rather sordidly prosperous under Leopold the rubber king, before the war, have been purged and purified by their baptism of fire. Under the spiritual leadership of the dauntless and saintly Mercier, they have become a religious people. They seem to have discovered afresh the real spirit of the Christian religion, as they have trodden the *via dolorosa* and experienced the meaning of saviorhood.

This experience of the Belgian nation has been shared by many a soldier who has heroically stood the triple challenge of danger, hardship, and suffering. Such a spirit of devotion to the cause is glorious to see. Often it is accompanied by a jaunty defiance even of death itself, which proves the hollow falsehood of Satan's faithless sneer, "All that a man hath will he give for his life"

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(Job 2:4). Describing his comrades in the early British forces in the war, Hankey, the "Student in Arms" writes: "Then at last we 'got out.' We were confronted with dearth, danger, and death. . . . Yet they, who had formerly been our despair, were now our glory. Their spirits effervesced. Their wit sparkled. Hunger and thirst could not depress them. Rain could not dampen them. Cold could not chill them. Every hardship became a joke. . . . Never was such a triumph of spirit over matter. . . . If it was another fellow that was hit, it was an occasion for tenderness and grief. But if one of them was hit, O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? . . . Life? They did not value life! They had never been able to make much of a fist of it. But if they lived amiss they died gloriously, with a smile for the pain and the dread of it. What else had they been born for? It was their chance. With a gay heart they gave their greatest gift, and with a smile to think that after all they had anything to give which was of value. One by one Death challenged them. One by one they smiled in his grim visage, and refused to be dismayed. They had been lost, but they had found the path that led them home; and when at last they laid their lives at the feet of the Good Shepherd, what could they do but smile?"¹

For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

¹ "A Student in Arms," p. 123.

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righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.—II Tim. 4: 6-8.

How Heroism Transfigures Men

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.—Rom. 8: 14-17.

There can be no experience more ennobling than this consciousness of suffering that others may live. It certainly refines character. It gives it a moral tonicity, an insight into life's higher meanings, and a zest of holy gladness which only the joy of sacrifice can impart. It is the transfiguration of the human spirit. John Oxenham has discerned this, and depicts it with unerring touch in his recent poem, "Face to Face With Reality."

"What did you see out there, my lad,
That has set that look in your eyes?
You went out a boy, you have come back a man,
With strange new depths underneath your tan;
What was it you saw out there, my lad,
That set such deeps in your eyes?"

'Strange things, and sad, and wonderful—
Things that I scarce can tell;
I have been in the sweep of the Reaper's scythe,
With God, and Christ, and hell.

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'I have seen Christ doing Christly deeds;
I have seen the devil at play;
I have grimped to the sod in the hand of God.
I have seen the God-less pray. . . .

'I have lain alone among the dead,
With no hope but to die;
I have seen them killing the wounded ones;
I have seen them crucify. . . .

'I have sped through hells of fiery hail,
With fell red-fury shod;
I have heard the whisper of a voice;
I have looked in the face of God.'

You've a right to your deep, high look, my lad,
You have met God in the ways;
And no man looks into His face
But he feels it all his days.
You've a right to your deep, high look, my lad,
And we thank Him for His grace."

It was of such splendid lads that Dr. Gilbert Murray, the author of "Faith, War, and Policy," writes, as he describes the typical Oxford men who have borne more than their part in the war: "As for me personally, there is one thought that is always with me, the thought that other men are dying for *me*, better men, younger, with more hope in their lives, many of whom I have taught and loved. The orthodox Christian will be familiar with the thought of One who loved you dying for you. I would like to say that now I seem to be familiar with the feeling that something innocent, something great, something that loved me, is dying and is dying daily for me. That

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is the sort of community we now are—a community in which one man dies for his brother.”²

Yet the last person to be pitied is one who has heard the call to saviorhood and has not flinched, but has been able to earn his martyr's crown. He is well content without a halo. That was a keen suggestion of a recent magazine writer, “Perhaps in the crowd at Golgotha the mother of Judas envied Mary as she stood below her crucified Son.” Of many of our modern martyrs it can even be said, “For the *joy* that was set before him, he endured the cross.” A dying Canadian soldier, writing from a hospital in France, revealed this joyous satisfaction in being able to die for his country, in this good-by note he wrote to his mother: “Mother dear, my orders have come, and in a few minutes I must go and report to my Commander at the great Headquarters. In these moments I am trying to make you know how happy I am; how proud to help in the holiest cause a man could serve. When I enlisted I knew such a day as this might come, but I do not regret it. I am happy in the thought that I can make my gift complete. But you must not worry; that is my only anxiety. Will you try to be glad and thankful with me? I shall go soon now, but I shall be happy and safe, and waiting.” . . . Faltering fingers added a sacred closing message of undying love.³

The same splendid note of lofty, joyous courage is sounded in a letter found in the pocket of a soldier after the battle. He had thoughtfully written it to his mother for delivery in case of his death. I quote but the closing paragraph: “. . . I have had a happy time of it. Don't

² “Faith, War, and Policy,” p. 92.

³ Quoted in “The High Call,” by Dr. Ernest M. Stires, p. 109.

be sorry for me. It is not every man who has the privilege of dying for all he thinks worth while in the world; and this old world without British influence for good, and without you dear people, would be a poor place to live in. We are fighting for very high ideals—justice, honesty, and fair-play among the nations, for the teachings of Christ, against those of the devil. It is an unselfish cause and one for which I am very proud to be fighting. I know you will be sad, but you can comfort yourself with the thought that you too have had to make a sacrifice for the noblest possible cause.”⁴

Such letters breathe the spirit worthy of the finest traditions of English and American heroism. It is great to know that the boys of today are proving true to their splendid heritage of loyalty to the nation’s noblest past, a loyalty which has never failed in crisis times, throughout Anglo-Saxon history. Lowell’s thrilling lines were no truer of the patriots of the Civil War than they are of our boys in khaki and the navy blue today:

“O Beautiful! my Country! . . .
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee;
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!”

Finding Christ in Flanders

Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all

⁴ *Ibid.*

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things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.—Phil. 3:8-11.

Not the least of our causes for thanksgiving, as we discover the splendid way in which our soldiers in all the allied armies are bearing their hardships and triumphantly suffering for the great cause, is *the effect upon the boys themselves*. Their experience of vicarious sacrifice is bringing them face to face with the Christ himself. The ordinary life at home in times of peace, the upholstered life of over-fed prosperity, blinds many a man to the inner life of religion and the things of the spirit. In his false security and independence, he feels little need of God, and takes no interest in heaven, while this world is so interesting and absorbing. But the discipline and harsh realities of war, the setting-up drills, physical and moral, the inner heart-searchings in the presence of great danger, the frequent imminence of death, and countless other experiences, replace carelessness in many a soldier with earnestness of spirit. He talks little of religion. He does not think himself to be religious. But the more he enters into Gethsemane experiences, the more he suffers for humanity's sake, the better he understands the story of Jesus Christ. He understands now what vicarious suffering is, though he may never have heard the word.

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Some day in the trenches perhaps, he finds Jesus and greets him as a comrade-in-arms, in the holy fellowship of suffering. This is the message of these homely, halting, but very human lines written by a nameless British soldier, in which he has interwoven a whole personal religious experience. There's a deal of human feeling in them, and great reassurance also for our faith, as we think of the many others of whom this experience is doubtless typical, and rejoice that our Christ is finding the men in Flanders and on every battle-line.

CHRIST IN FLANDERS

"We had forgotten You, or very nearly,
You did not seem to touch us very nearly.

Of course we thought about You now and then,
Especially in any time of trouble.

We knew that You were good in time of trouble,
But we were very ordinary men.

And there were always other things to think of;
There's lots of things a man has got to think of,

His work, his home, his pleasure, and his wife;

And so we only thought of You on Sunday;

Sometimes perhaps not even on a Sunday,

Because there's always lots to fill one's life.

And all the while, in street or lane or byway,

In country lane, in city street or byway,

You walked among us, and we did not see.

Your feet were bleeding as You walked our pavements.

How did we miss your foot-prints on our pavements?

Can there be other folk as blind as we?

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Now we remember, over here in Flanders.
(It isn't strange to think of You in Flanders.)

This hideous warfare seems to make things clear.
We never thought about You much in England;
But now that we are far away from England,
We have no doubts—we know that You are here.

You helped us pass the jest along the trenches,
Where in cold blood we waited in the trenches,
You touched the ribaldry and made it fine.
You stood beside us in our pain and weakness.
We're glad to think You understand our weakness.
Somehow it seems to help us not to whine.

We think about You kneeling in the garden.
Ah, God, the agony of that dread garden!
We know You prayed for us upon the cross.
If anything could make us glad to bear it,
'Twould be the knowledge that You willed to bear it,
Pain, death, the uttermost of human loss.

Though we forgot You, You will not forget us.
We feel so sure that You will not forget us.
But stay with us until this dream is past.
And so we ask for courage, strength, and pardon—
Especially, I think, we ask for pardon,
And that You'll stand beside us to the last."⁵

Finding Christ at Home through Fellowship in Suffering

When we think of the soldiers' dangers and privations,
there seems to be little real sacrifice at home. How can

⁵Quoted in "With Our Soldiers in France," p. 194.

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we speak of the sufferings of civilians, in safe, comfortable homes, 3,000 miles from danger? And yet when the city of Medford, Massachusetts, held a public meeting to honor the three Medford boys in France who were the first to be cited for special bravery in action, there seemed to be a fine appropriateness in the act of the mayor in pinning the war cross of heroism upon the breasts of the mothers of those three soldier boys. The highest costs of every war are likely to be borne by the mothers. Angela Morgan's poem, "The Battle Cry of the Mothers," depicts in vivid realism the sacrifices which women have always made in war. She makes this appeal to the crowned heads that force wars of aggression upon their people:

"Emperors! Kings! On your heedless throne,
Do you hear the cry that the mothers make?
The blood you shed is our own, our own;
You shall answer for our sake.
When you pierce his side, you have pierced our side.
O mothers! The ages we have cried!
And the shell that sunders his flesh apart
Enters our bleeding heart."

This cry of the mothers against the slaughter of war is perfectly justifiable, when the war is needless or unjust; but in our country at least it is seldom expressed. The mothers are usually as patriotic as their sons and seldom complain of their great sacrifices: No man knows the battles won by help of mothers' prayers, or the vast sustaining power of these prayers for the boys who are in danger far from home. Our mothers are not likely to suffer one-tenth of the awful hardships and insults of the European women, especially in Belgium, France, Serbia,

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and Poland; but there will be sacrifice enough before the war shall end. It will involve not only painful anxiety, and the loss of dear ones possibly, but much incidental privation, poverty, and unaccustomed toil. Yet with all their sacrifices, women, the country over, will make many gains by the war, as they already have done in England. Beside the extension of the franchise, they will gain, to a large extent, economic and industrial equality with men. They have well deserved and have already gained large recognition in community leadership and the satisfaction of rendering great service to the nation, through their Red Cross work and numberless other war activities.

Civilian men will also bear increasingly heavy burdens, before the war is won. We are likely to know the crushing weight of taxes as never imagined before. We shall feel the speeding up of industry in many lines, almost to the breaking point. The strain of high prices of commodities will be more and more severe, especially in homes where the breadwinners have gone with the colors. The scarcity of labor will double the burdens of many in short-handed shops, factories, and offices; and this overwork, with overstrain, will be accompanied by constant anxiety in most of our homes, for the boys at the front. If ever the men of America needed the sustaining power of religion, it is now. Instinctively thousands of them are looking to Christ for strength. They will find him, if they seek him in the ranks of those who suffer and the homes of those who need. May God grant that our whole nation, after grandly assuming the burdens of a gloriously unselfish war, with no hope or desire for any sort of gain, may find a blessing as great as its sacrifice. May the men of America, through their manifold sacrifices for the sake

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of a better world, find a real comradeship with the world's great Savior.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you. . . . And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
—I Pet. 5:6, 7, 10, 11.

Are We Sure that Sacrifice Pays?

Sacrifice is a burden lightly borne with the joy of a loving loyal heart, if the motives for it are kept clear and strong. But if the motives are lost, the zest is gone, and then sacrifice becomes intolerable. As the burdens of this war increase, and more and more the sacrifices pinch, and the sufferings multiply, we shall ask ourselves the question, quite silently at first, "After all, does it pay?" To prevent even this unuttered thought of the slacker, we, soldiers and civilians all, need to keep the motives crisp and clear. I would that in every home where war weariness is apt to enter, and every soldiers' barracks where the first blush of disloyalty to the cause begins to appear, there might be posted this clear statement of the simplest, strongest motive of the war:

"Freedom is a precious, an inalienable human right. What have men been fighting for in this war? Not for land or money, not hate or glory; but for *Freedom*, the crown of all character. If the enemy offered to pave your streets with gold, with the promise of a science that

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could obviate all sickness and suffering, but at the price of enslaving your sons, would you choose the ease of slavery, or the suffering of freedom? Would you rather be a contented pig in a golden sty, or a suffering man, struggling for character, fighting for his nation, sacrificing for humanity, with the power of an endless life? Would your choice lie with the unequal strife of the brave Greeks of old, as they ran down the plains of Marathon with the shout of Freedom, or with the drunken revelry of the enslaved Persians? Would you choose to follow Leonidas and the Spartan heroes, dying for Greek freedom, or be surfeited in Xerxes' tents of luxury? Do you glory in a Belgium, rich with a Leopold's spoils of an enslaved Congo, or in a Belgium stretched on a cross of suffering for Europe's freedom? And if you glory in the fight for freedom in the past, will you not accept your own cross of suffering now in the present?"⁶

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God.—Rom. 8: 18, 19.

The great thought of future compensation, that the sufferings of the present should be borne with fortitude and patience because of the future glory to be won, is the stoicism of faith. It has helped many to bear their sorrows with a smile. But to others it brings little comfort to relieve the present strain.

After all, the real reason sacrifice pays, when high

⁶ Sherwood Eddy, in "Suffering and the War," p. 51.

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motive demands it, *is because it is godlike*. Suffering tests the mettle of the soul, and "the whole creation waits for the revealing." For kingly souls, formed as it were of living gold which stands the fiery furnace, the outcome is assured. They stand forth in the glory of their sacrifice, "*revealed as sons of God*." In the fiery furnace of this war, the Christ is finding many comrades. Humanity, in the midst of its Calvary, is shining forth in all the glory of its birthright. As day after day the overworked cables tick out the endless messages of bravery, courage, and deathless loyalty which never counts the cost, we are learning anew the glorious stuff which God has put into the hearts of men. Yes, in such a cause the sacrifice is worth the cost. It shows we are sons of the King. It shows us our kinship with Christ. It helps us to find him, in the thick of battle, as we incarnate his Spirit.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why does the modern world calendar date from Jesus' birth? What was the most godlike thing about Jesus? Why has his name become the most prominent in all history?

What is vicarious sacrifice and why do you admire it? How did Belgium save the liberties of Europe? What effect did this experience have upon her national character?

Do you believe Satan's words, "All that a man hath will he give for his life"? What effect has vicarious suffering had upon the soldiers in this war?

How does heroism transfigure men? Why do men often welcome danger and the chance to be heroic? In what sense is it true that our soldiers are suffering and dying *for us*?

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What does Paul mean by "the fellowship of Christ's suffering"? How do discipline and hardship affect the soldier boys? Does suffering for others help them to understand Jesus?

In what various ways are people in America sacrificing to help win the war? What great gains are women, in various countries, making because of the war? How can religion help men bear the increasing strain which the war is likely to bring?

Do you think the results of this war will be worth what you have sacrificed for it? What is the great reason why sacrifice pays?

CHAPTER V

FINDING THE COMRADE GOD BY THE HELP OF THE CHRIST

A New Heresy: Redemption by Battle Death

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.—John 15:13.

At the left of the entrance to the chapel of the University of the Sorbonne in Paris there is a very striking painting. Its position of high honor indicates its local popularity. It bears the title of "The Two Saviors." It presents together the dying Christ on the cross of Calvary, and a mortally wounded soldier of France on a modern battlefield. The Christ dying for the world and the soldier dying for his country are both held up to the worshipers in this university chapel as objects of reverence.

The writer frankly acknowledges that when he first saw this painting his feeling was distinctly unfavorable. It seemed a species of near-blasphemy. We can give great honor to the patriot martyr who dies to save his country, without elevating his noble act to the level of divine saviorhood. The soldier in this present war who willingly suffers for the great Cause, who gives his all in vicarious sacrifice, certainly reflects the spirit of Jesus Christ, who suffered that others might live. Both illustrate the truth of the Scripture: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his

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friends." Both command our unlimited respect and admiration. The purpose of the preceding chapter was to show how Christlike is the vicarious sacrifice of the Christian soldier who suffers to make the world better, and to show also how the experience teaches the soldier the true meaning of saviorhood and helps him to understand his Master, Jesus Christ.

It appears that in some quarters on the battle front this suggestive thought has been carried too far. We are told that both French Romanist chaplains and English Protestant chaplains have taught that death in battle has redemptive value for the soldier. Belief in redemption by battle death is a new kind of heresy. There can be no question that many a soldier is made a better man by the discipline and severe testings of a righteous war. Without doubt the experience of suffering for others has a refining influence upon character. But to imagine it possible to escape the moral penalties of an immoral life by dying in battle is not only contrary to the religion of Christ, but contrary to common sense. It is just one more theory of magical atonement for sin. The dying soldier must carry with him into eternity the character he produced in life. No single act, however noble and morally sublime, can counteract an immoral life, reverse vicious habits, and give the man a right heart of universal good will. Only the Christ Spirit entering the soldier's heart can gradually accomplish this transforming miracle. To teach him that he can atone for his own sins by dying for his country is but the cruelty of arousing false hopes. The soldier has the mightiest challenge for high and noble living and heroic dying, but he needs redemption through Jesus Christ fully as much as his civilian brother in the

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old home. Sherwood Eddy says in this connection, "It is going far beyond the province of the Christian minister to offer any hope other than that which is offered by our Lord Himself. It is not death, or a bullet, or battle, that saves. Christ only saves, and there is no other name given under heaven. But although one may not preach so dangerous and misleading a doctrine, it is nevertheless possible to realize that many a man is unconsciously more of a Christian than he knows, and that in the last day he may say with surprise: 'When saw I Thee an hungered and fed Thee?' "¹

Our Need of Christ to Make God Seem Personal

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.—John 14:6-11.

The trouble with much of the religion of the trenches is its indefiniteness. With many of us at home, God is

¹ "With Our Soldiers in France," p. 148.

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only a vague abstraction. The same is true, also, of too many of the soldiers. They believe in God as a mighty influence, but hardly as a person. They do not know him; they merely know of him. There is a vast difference. A hearsay God does not help a man much when the pinch comes and he needs divine help. Somehow we must get acquainted with the Comrade God. We must know him as an ever-present, constant Friend and Father, both able and willing to help us. It is one thing to feel awe-stricken at the thought of God and to wonder at his power. It is quite another thing to live constantly with the joy of his conscious presence. If ever the world needed this latter, it is now.

One wonderful result of the experience of these stressful times, for all of us at home or at the front, should be the rediscovery of God. If we have simply taken God for granted, or perhaps have just ignored him, the awful upheaval of our terrible generation with its interplay of colossal forces is likely to reveal him. Possibly in the former days of easy prosperity we were comfortable enough without God and it was easy to forget him. But life is different now. Fathers cannot part with their sons for overseas service and the constant danger involved without realizing their human weakness, their need of divine help. Life's hazards are increasing, its uncertainties multiplying. Our pathetic human frailty in the vortex of titanic forces makes us all humble and dependent upon God. It kills our pride, our confidence, our self-sufficiency; but it is good for our souls. It makes us grope in our darkness for the invisible Spirit of Efficient Good Will which faith tells us is still at the heart of life.

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But just because this Spirit God is invisible and intangible, he seems a foreigner to our world. If we live only in the world of the senses, we do not find him, for the physical senses cannot report him to us. Only our inner consciousness, the eye and ear of the soul, can tell us of his presence. But even then, it is hard for us to know him as a *person*. We need his vastness "stepped down" to the range of our human perceptions. We need his infinite power, wisdom, and love somehow focussed within the narrow scope of our human understanding. This is just what Jesus of Nazareth does for us. He lived for us the human life of God. He made God visible, vocal, and tangible to men—as much of God as could be interpreted to human senses and expressed through human flesh. Thus he interprets God to men.

How the Word Became Flesh

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.—
John 1:4, 5, 14.

The human ear is a wonderful instrument for capturing sound waves and interpreting them through the brain to the human mind, with its inborn love of music. But only a few octaves can possibly be heard by men. The animals, the birds, even the savage, can hear more than we. The rich, deep undertones and the soft overtones which perfect the "music of the spheres" are lost to our perceptions

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altogether, because they are out of the range of our few octaves. Likewise the infinite reaches of the omniscient, omnipresent God cannot by any possibility be brought within the few octaves of our human comprehension; but all of God that we are capable of perceiving we find interpreted to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." And we see in the growing character of Jesus the moral qualities of God perfectly expressed. His sinless and heroic life shows us the wonderful holiness, patience, compassion, fearlessness, and love of God himself. These qualities the human mind can learn to comprehend. But we are told that the Christ, when he became man, "emptied himself"; that is, the divine Spirit gave up infinite power and wisdom and omnipresence, for a human body must be localized in space and be limited necessarily in power and in knowledge. To redeem the world Jesus did not need these natural attributes of God. It is the *moral* life of God, revealed in Christ, which brings men to their knees for redemption. It is because our Father God is like Jesus in his moral character that we feel bound to love him. When we know Jesus Christ, we discover the personal God, for he reveals to us what God is like. He interprets to our minds and hearts the Comrade God, who is a Personal Spirit of Efficient Good Will, our Father God.

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even

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unto death, yea, the death of the cross.—Phil.
2: 5-8.

The soldier, of all men, needs Christ to make God seem personal to him. He is in danger of worshiping merely a God of power, an impersonal Force. He may cultivate a marvelous fearlessness in the midst of all kinds of danger. But the very majesty of the awful cataclysm of physical forces and high explosives keeps him mindful of his littleness. And then the silent background of the starlit night, its infinite quiet and peace, its suggestion of unlimited reserves of strength—all so different from the chaos among men—compel him to feel, at moments of lonely leisure, the sublime presence of a God of unmeasured, undreamed-of power. This discovery sobers and humbles the soldier boy. It fills his soul for the time being with awe and a feeling of reverence. It often brings him to his knees in prayer. But this experience is likely to be only temporary and to have little effect upon character, if it goes no deeper. The soldier's God of Power must be translated for him into a Comrade God. Only Jesus Christ can do this for him. He can teach him that his God is a personal presence, in whom he lives and moves and has his being. The religion of a God of Power is mere Mohammedanism, or lifeless Deism. The Christian's God is a person, a Comrade God of Efficient Good Will. He is brought near to the soul by our knowledge of Jesus the Christ.

The Reconciling God in Christ

Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away;

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behold, they are become new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation.—II Cor. 5: 17-19.

This is the heart of the great truth of the incarnation, the fact of God in life. It is great for a man to discover God present in the midst of this world. It gives new confidence to faith when a man discovers God's leadership in life and history. It gives unity and consistency to a man's thinking when he discovers God in all the natural laws of life. But we really find the Comrade God when he is revealed to us through Jesus Christ. *The heart of Christianity is the great truth that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."*

This great word of Scripture is sometimes called "essential Christianity." It contains the heart of the Gospel, the good news of God. It is the key which unlocks the mystery of Christ's life and death and their meaning for us. God was in Jesus Christ for a purpose. His purpose was to "reconcile the world unto himself." This shows how the Christian religion is exactly the opposite of all pagan faiths. In every pagan religion the acts of worship, sacrifices, burnt offerings, acts of magic, elaborate performance of ritual, are all for one purpose: to placate the anger of the gods and purchase their favor. Sometimes heathen tribes worship both good gods and bad. The gods they imagine as good and benevolent they neglect, for why should they bother with a god who will do them no harm? So they devote their attention to the

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evil gods, whose revengeful passions they fear. They offer rich offerings and make elaborate vows; they torture themselves recklessly before the bloody pagan altar, to show the depth of their zeal, in order that the anger of their god may be appeased. Evidently their god is their devil. They cannot love him. Secretly perhaps they hate him. But, imaginary though he is, he holds them in the grip of a superstitious terror. They imagine that he sends all the troubles and evils that afflict their poor ignorant lives, so they beg for his mercy. When defeated by their enemies, they feel that their god has punished them in a fit of passion, so they redouble their pious exertions to win back his favor and overcome his jealous anger over their neglect. This is paganism.

Did Jesus Die to Make God Good?

We find a good deal of latent paganism lurking in the hearts of Christian people. They try to bargain with God. Their prayers often are but the cries of fear, begging God to change his wrath toward them into personal favor. They pray to or through Jesus Christ, whom they love and trust, to almighty God whom they only fear, because they really do not know him. They imagine that somehow Christ died to placate God and to get God to take a loving interest in men. The atonement they understand as the price Christ paid for us to reconcile God and get him to forgive us. But this would be essential paganism. It casts a grievous shadow over the very face of God. If such folks only knew God, they could not think so badly and unkindly of him. They forget that the Christian's God is the Father of Jesus Christ, our

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Father God, "the God of all comfort and the Father of mercies." He does not need to be placated or his anger appeased. The whole aim of the great atonement is in the other direction. "Jesus died, not to make God good, but to make us good." God's heart needed no changing, no reconciling. He is always ready to forgive if we will let him. No true father ever needs to be reconciled to his children. The truth of the whole matter lies in this wonderful sentence of Paul: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." In Christ we see infinite Love serving and suffering for men; which is another way of saying that the Christ, who was living the human life of God, was doing his utmost, all that love could do, to win the wandering children of God back to their Father's heart and home.

Now when the Pharisee that had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Teacher, say on. A certain lender had two debtors: the one owed five hundred shillings, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. . . . Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat

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at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that even forgiveth sins? And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—Luke 7: 39-43, 47-50.

This gospel of ready forgiveness, the good news of a Father-God always ready to forgive, is sometimes called a weak gospel. Some pharisaic elder brothers, complacent in their smug sense of goodness, object to too free offers of the divine forgiveness. To be sure, their spiritual stinginess cannot change the facts! God still forgives the penitent in spite of them! But some of us need to have more faith in the honesty and permanence of penitence, and the power of forgiveness to win a man's grateful loyalty to God. We all know that the tender-hearted Lincoln was often accused of too great clemency. Dr. Fosdick quotes an instance. A certain Union soldier had deserted, was recaptured and sentenced to be shot. He appealed to the President for pardon, promised to be loyal and true in the future, and Mr. Lincoln, with faith in the man, pardoned him, giving him this letter:

“Executive Mansion,

Oct. 4, 1864.

Upon condition that Roswell McIntyre of Co. E, 6th Reg't of New York Cavalry, returns to his Regiment and faithfully serves out his term, making up for lost time, or until otherwise discharged, he is fully pardoned for any supposed desertion heretofore committed, and this paper is his pass to go to his Regiment.

Abraham Lincoln.”

“Was such clemency,” asks Dr. Fosdick, “an occasion for

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lax character? The answer is written across the face of Mr. Lincoln's letter in the archives: 'Taken from the body of R. McIntyre at the battle of Five Forks, Va., 1865.' Five Forks was the last cavalry action of the war; McIntyre went through to the finish. Anyone who knows the experience of being forgiven understands the motives that so remake a pardoned deserter. The relief from the old crushing condemnation, the joy of being trusted again beyond desert, the gratitude that makes men rather die than be untrue a second time . . . this is the moral consequence of being pardoned."²

No, a gospel of forgiveness is not a weak gospel. God's pardon is a mighty moral motive for us all. So it is the mission of the living Christ ever to reconcile men to their Father God, who needs no reconciling, but waits to welcome them back to his presence, his unfailing forgiveness and love. Jesus told his disciples, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christians must never forget that God is like Jesus, in all his moral qualities, in his perfect character. Perhaps this is what Beecher meant in his vivid statement, "The only God I know is Jesus Christ." Certainly the only personal God we can know is the God whom Jesus teaches and reveals to us, the God who was unveiled in Christ's perfect life. We must know Jesus, therefore, in order to feel sure that our God, whose Presence we feel, is really a Person. Only through knowing Christ are we led to realize that our God is not a mere aggregation of awful forces and impersonal cosmic power, but a throbbing, thinking, feeling, loving Personal Presence of Efficient Good Will.

² "The Meaning of Faith," p. 260.

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A Soldier's Discovery of God through Christ

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not: but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—II Cor. 4: 1-6.

In the same suggestive book which we have quoted above, Mr. Eddy gives us an interesting instance which is doubtless typical of many. He speaks of the vagueness of the soldiers' religion at the front. He speaks of their moments of deep impressions, which alternate with their days of careless neglect. He refers to their deep longings, intuitions, and hunger of heart, and the fact that the moment anyone begins to attack religion or start a discussion upon vital themes, the men show at once that they have been doing some thinking of their own in private. He says, "Most of them believe in God, although they do not know Him in a personal way. They believe in religion, but have not made it vital and dominant in

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their lives. They have a vague sense or intuition that there is a God and that He is a good God, round about and above them. He is looked upon, however, not as One whom they are to seek first, but rather as a last resort; not as a present Father and constant Friend, but as One to whom they can turn in time of need. . . . They revere God from afar off and in one compartment of their being, but they have never opened their lives to Him. They have a reverence for Him in the face of death, in the hour of need and in the great crises of life. Most of them like to sing the Christian hymns on Sunday evening and have thoughts of home and of loved ones that are sacred. They do not feel that they have come into close personal relations with God, but neither do they consciously feel that they are out of relation with Him. . . .

Before us as we write lies the photograph of a young sergeant. Before the war he was an atheist, an illegitimate child, a member of the criminal class. But in the trenches he found God. Blown up by a mine, for sixteen days he lost the power of speech and of memory. He returned from the front with a deep sense of God, but with no personal, vital relationship to Christ. He eagerly welcomed the first real message that went straight to his heart, and the personal word of loving sympathy which led him to relate his deep experience of the trenches to the presence of the living Christ. All this man needed was someone to interpret to him his own experience, and bring him into the relationship with God which his own heart craved and longed for.”³

³ “With Our Soldiers in France,” pp. 144-146.

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This young man had been brought to feel God's infinite, powerful presence in the titanic forces of the battle field, but could not understand God or know him as a great loving Person, until he came to know Jesus Christ and see in him the face of the Comrade God. Mr. Eddy had the great joy of leading him to Christ. Then Christ led him to God, or rather interpreted the character of the mighty God of whom he had already become conscious in his life. Then the great Power became a loving personal Presence.

The Great Comrade of the Way

If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you.—John 14:15-18.

A truly religious life is not one which has occasional fits of piety, and prays only in moments of danger, coming to God only as a last resort. This is hardly the brave man's way. The religious life is more constant than that. It is by finding God to be a life comrade that we learn to trust him in danger.

By "practicing the presence of God" we come to feel him as a part of our ordinary life; and soon we find that all our life is God-guided and protected, and this brings us peace within, though war may rage without.

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"Where is your Lord?
Seated on God's right hand,
Captain of Heaven's host,
Directing campaigns grand
On some removed coast
Of Eternity's vast sea—
So far above
Man's highest love
He cannot reached be?

Where is your Lord?
At God's right hand in sooth:
Where'er his servants brave
Are fighting for the truth,
That all the world may have
His larger life. 'Tis here
The Christ is found:
His accents sound
Within your soul—so near!

Where is your Lord?
Within the daily round
Of duty. God's command
For you just now's the sound
Of the Master's voice. Stand
To your hard task! Be true
To your ideal!
God's will's the real—
Your Lord dwells there for you."⁴

Herein is the secret of the strong life, the Christian life which is dauntless and victorious. It is by feeling sure that our Lord is with us as he promised, that we are able

⁴ Doremus Scudder, quoted in Bosworth's "Thirty Studies About Jesus," p. 170.

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to face with courage whatever the day's work may bring us. It should not be difficult to convince ourselves that if we are in the path of duty our Lord is by our side. If we are at a post of dangerous responsibility, he is surely with us. If we are at our post, covering our personal sector in the great battle-line of the democracy of God, we may be certain we are not alone. Our great Comrade of the Way is sharing our vigil, our burden, our anxiety. He is making holy every common task, which we have accepted with devoted spirit, and transfiguring this task by the radiance of his presence.

And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. 28:20b.

“War worn I kneel tonight,
Lord, by thine altar!
Oh, in tomorrow's fight
Let me not falter!
Bless my dark arms for me,
Christ, King of Chivalry!”
—Alfred Noyes, “The Old Knight's Vigil.”

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What do you think of the French painting of “The Two Saviors”? What is the subtle danger in the new heresy, “Redemption by battle death”? Can a single brave act make character over new?

How does Jesus help you to feel sure that God is a person?

What divine qualities did Jesus show the world in their perfectness? What do you think Paul means when he says Jesus “emptied himself” and assumed human form?

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What great verse of Paul's is sometimes called "essential Christianity"? What is the aim and purpose of heathen worship? How does Christianity then differ from paganism?

Who was to be reconciled by Jesus' death? Did he die to change God's mind or heart? How does an undeserved forgiveness brace you up to do your moral best?

Do you think of God as a sort of last resort in emergencies, or as a constant friend?

What is meant by the phrase "practicing the presence of God"? In times of danger and responsibility, can you feel that Christ shares your vigil?

CHAPTER VI

FINDING CHRIST'S POWER TO SAVE FROM SIN

A Sin Cure: The First Test of Religion

We all know, in moments when we are frank with ourselves, that our great enemy is *sin*. It bars every gate, whatever be our aim and purpose in life. If happiness is our supreme good, sin blocks the way; if our purpose is goodness and high character, sin is what defeats our purpose; if an efficient, useful life is our aim, our most effective enemy, which makes us miss our aim, is sin, our personal sin. It gradually cankers the virtue in our life. It cuts the nerve of our physical strength and mental efficiency. It coarsens our whole nature and makes selfish our heart. It takes the joy out of life. It destroys appreciation of true happiness, and even the pleasures of sense gradually fade and pall when evil habits paralyze the feelings and deaden the nerves. The wages of sin is death; for sin is a fatal disease of the human spirit.

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust,

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when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin,
when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death.—
James 1:12-15.

Sin is not confined to any one level of society. It is found among all classes. Dr. Fosdick vividly says, "Sin has many aliases and can swiftly shift its guise to gain a welcome into any company. Sin in the slums is gross and terrible. It staggers down the streets, blasphemes with oaths that can be heard, wallows in vice unmentionable by modest lips. Then some day prosperity may visit it. It moves to a finer residence, seeks the suburbs, or finds domicile on a college campus. It changes all its clothes. No longer is it indecent and obscene. Its speech is mild, its civility is irreproachable. It gathers a company of friends who minister to pleasure and respectability, and the cry of the world's need dies unheard at its peaceful door. It presses its face continually through the pickets of social allowance, like a bad boy who wishes to trespass on forbidden ground but fears the consequence. Its goodness is superficial seeming; at heart it is as bad as it dares to be. It has completely changed its garments, but it is the same sin—indulgent, selfish, and unclean. Sin, as anyone can easily observe, takes a very high polish."¹

But this disease is not incurable, and it is the first business of religion to cure it. A religion which has no remedy for this, our worst disease, is not really a religion at all. It is merely a social veneer of respectability, and an anesthetic for conscience. *The sure test of genuine religion is its power over sin.* Inferior types of religion

¹ "The Meaning of Faith," p. 251.

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merely ignore sin altogether, and deal with magic and superstition; but all the great religions of history are redemptive religions. They have something to say about sin, and some remedy to offer for the great disease. Buddha, Zoroaster, and Mohammed, Moses and Christ, all recognized sin as the great enemy of humanity, and the priests of these five greatest faiths have tried to help men get rid of their spiritual burdens. By enforcing the rules of penance and fasting, prayer and confession, strict ritual and stringent obedience, non-Christian faiths have struggled with the problem of getting rid of sin, but the task has been too great for them. They have doubtless, at their best, reduced the virulence of the disease, but they have not been able to cure it.

We discover this to be true among the Sikh soldiers from India, fighting under England in France. Joseph Callan, father of the Red Triangle work, came with them in that first expedition from India, and set up the first Christian Association tent at the front. Even with strict supervision, vice crept into the camp and there was an outbreak of drunkenness and immorality among the Sikhs. In order to furnish warning as well as severe punishment, the commander called out the whole garrison of 25,000 troops to witness the public flogging of these offenders. The Sikh soldiers felt very much disgraced and held a council in the Young Men's Christian Association hut, after which they asked to have an Association secretary speak to them all on the subject of temperance and purity. After an earnest address of an hour and a half, though the preaching of Christian doctrines was officially forbidden, the moral results were surprising. "A remarkable scene of repentance was witnessed," says an eye-witness.

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"Men arose on all hands, confessing their sins in respect to these two special failings, and requested that penalties be imposed on them by their own priest in accordance with the custom of their religion, as a punishment for the past and as a guarantee for the future. For nearly two hours the men filed past their priest receiving penalties. Later on they held a service of their own in the Young Men's Christian Association hut on Christmas day and took up a large collection of copper coins as a thank-offering to the Association. They felt it had been their one friend in a strange land." Here we see repentance and penance helping men to live better, even under the forms of a rather high-grade heathen faith. Yet the result must have been very far from what we know as Christian character. Sin was for the time suppressed, but not conquered. It takes more than penance to redeem from sin.

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the

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Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.—Eph. 6: 12-18.

Evil Habit, the Death Grip of Sin

The reason sin gets the strangle-hold on so many men is because we are creatures of habit. The evil impulses are strong, and when indulged they soon form habits which speedily become second nature. Every time the sin is repeated, or even rehearsed in imagination, it grooves the brain-paths deeper, so that the next time temptation comes, it is more difficult than ever to resist it. We soon become slaves, bound by shackles of our own forging. The problem of redemption is to break those shackles. No one has ever put more plainly the bitter experience of this strangle-hold of sin than St. Paul:

I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into

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captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?—Rom. 7: 14-24.

This cry for deliverance from the fatal disease of sin is a bitter cry. The bitterness of it is due to the fact that sin and evil habits had grown stronger than Paul's best self. He felt sin to be an evil giant within him, strangling to death his better nature. With such habits, his good intentions to do better were weak and powerless. Wishing to be good accomplished nothing. Thinking it was right to do right accomplished nothing. His bad habits were in command and he had to obey them, for they had got their roots deep down into his life and mastered him. The mystery of it all was, why could he no longer do what he wanted to? Why was he no longer his own master? He felt as though some evil spirit had got control of his life. But it was only the evil spirit of his own bad habits, which his own sinful life had made, until they had become too strong to break without help.

Sin Its Own Worst Penalty

For centuries men have debated the question of the adequate punishment for sin. Whether sin is viewed as selfishness, disobedience to law, or separation from God's loving presence, it calls for severe penalty. The imaginations of men have suggested punishments varying from freezing cold to burning heat, from immediate annihilation at death to a lingering eternity of everlasting physical torture—quite oblivious of the fact that after the body dies the human spirit will feel neither heat nor cold nor

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physical pain. We must accept such descriptive language as the "lake of fire and brimstone," as merely figurative. It is an attempt to put in vivid, physical terms a purely mental experience, the torture of the soul, not the body, of the impenitent.

There are, to be sure, inevitable physical results of sin in this world, such as the vengeance taken by an outraged body when the physical laws of life are broken. And there are the pains of memory which we call remorse, the most refined type of spiritual torture. But serious as are these penalties, the most natural result of sin and its most awful penalty is the continuance of sin itself. No prospect could be more horrible than to keep on sinning through eternity, the victims of our own evil habits which we are powerless to break. Thus sin tends to become its own terrible punishment. The law of habit shows how relentlessly this works out in this present life, and we have no reason to doubt that death will continue it in the future. This is the plain teaching of the closing chapter in the Bible, which refers to the day of fate when earth-formed habits become fixed and irrevocable:

For the time is at hand. He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.
—Rev. 22: 11, 12.

What sentence could be more awful or more just than this decree that a man elect his own penalty and be

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punished by his own sin? Thus we see that we are punished most, not *for* our sins, but *by* our sins. Sin, then, is the most fearful thing in all the world. Many have worried over the "unpardonable sin," puzzled by the word of Jesus, but *the only person whom a Father-God cannot forgive is he who clings to evil habits and will not quit his sin*. The willingness to give up sinning makes forgiveness possible. Yet the power to break off evil habits, and to be redeemed from sin, must be stronger than the power of a wish; and it must be found outside ourselves. Many a slave of sin has cried out with Paul, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" There is but one answer: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Present Worth of the Savior Christ

And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.—
Matt. 1:21.

All through the Christian centuries men have called Jesus of Nazareth their Savior from sin. Unless he had earned this title, he never could have kept it all these years. But we find he deserves this title, for he has had marvelous power to lift men above their evil habits. He has given moral courage to men and the spiritual power to meet and overcome temptation. No other moral force in history has equaled the saving power of Jesus Christ, for rescuing and redeeming character. Well may we join in the great confession: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

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In the soft days before the war, culture and respectability were apt to vaunt themselves as substitutes for salvation. Sin veneered by conventional social custom became respectable and the great fact was sometimes obscured, which our fathers used to stress, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Jesus for many was accepted as the great Teacher, but not as personal Savior. This was perhaps more natural in days of easy prosperity, when ideals were not quite so regnant as today, and the deeper notes of experience were less often struck; while many of us alternated between frivolous pleasures and the feverish pursuit of wealth. But those days are gone. The sterner days of war have brought us back to reality. Confronted by the daily challenge to face danger, to suffer hardships, to accept sacrifice as the rule of life, and all the war disciplines at home as well as at the front, we have come back afresh to the great facts and forces of religion.

Men are discovering anew their need of Christ. They are not only finding comfort in his teachings to help them in these days of strain, but they are also finding his power to save from sin. This is shown in the greater frankness of men with one another, their increased earnestness of purpose, and their ready willingness to respond to religious appeals. Whatever else the war has done, it has put an end to a superficial age; it has brought us face to face with facts; it has taught us that in our life of uncertain futures and of moral stress and weakness, we sorely need a Savior, a divine Helper and Friend. Jesus of Nazareth was never worth more to the world than now. *Never was he more evidently in the thick of the human struggle.*

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Christ in the Army Hospitals

The book of the acts of the apostles is never ended. The story of redemption from sin by the power of Christ is a continuing story all through the Christian era. In the midst of the world war we are writing some striking chapters in this story. One's faith is revived as we discover the response the Christ appeal is winning along the western front. This war, with all its hideous revelations of the blackness of human sin, with its scientific cruelty, its organized lust, its unrestrained outbreaks of passion, has also shown that sinful men have the same heart hungers as in simpler days, for the upright life of purity and noble character. And people who have fancied that "the days of conversions are over" and that no longer "there is healing for the sinner," but only "more graces for the good," have only to read the current annals of the Red Triangle work in France to discover their mistake. They will discover that *Christ is still saving men from their sins.*

Recent careful investigations seem to show that we are in danger of overestimating the amount of venereal disease in army camps. Dr. Max Exner is of the opinion that "soldiers, even in the worst armies, show a lower percentage of venereal disease than the same group of men would show in civil life." Americans are justly proud of the remarkable record of our Army and Navy in reducing to the minimum this evil, thanks to the high stand of our officers and heads of departments on this moral question. Friends of our boys overseas should be thankful that they are actually safer morally and physically than in civilian life at home. Recognizing this fact fully,

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it may still be noted that some of the most striking cases of transformed character may be found in the venereal hospitals of the allied armies. Surely if Christ can work his miracle of moral healing under such difficult conditions, he can transform human character anywhere.

The splendid preventive work of the Young Men's Christian Association in this connection is widely known. Its all-round ministry to the human needs of the soldiers—helping them to build up strong, clean bodies, and meanwhile serving generously their normal social needs, and meeting as thoroughly as possible their intellectual and spiritual wants—is greatly reducing immorality. A striking testimony to this fact comes from a profane old English major: "For a year and a half my camp led all the rest as the worst in venereal disease, with some twenty-five fresh cases every week. The first week after the Young Men's Christian Association was opened we had only ten cases, the next week six, the third week only two, and it has not risen above that since. Your Association is the ——— best cure for this evil!"

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.—John 14:12.

Some Modern Miracles of Moral Healing

But in ministering to the fallen this Christian agency is also wonderfully successful. It is remarkable how the love of Christ wins these poor fellows in the army hospitals, brings them out of their despondency with a new grip on life, and sends them forth transformed men. In

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a short evangelistic campaign, there were over two hundred converts in one hospital where eight hundred were under treatment. Profound changes took place in the characters of these men before they left the camp. A recent book by a Red Triangle leader describes several of these transformed lives: "Here is Dan, a young chauffeur, a strong-willed, self-sufficient young fellow who thought he needed no help and no religion. He has a Christian wife at home to whom he has been untrue, for the temptations of war swept him off his feet like a flood. In the meetings this week he turned to Christ and has been working right and left bringing in others ever since.

"Beside him is a poor fellow whom he has just brought to the meetings. He went on leave to England, only to find his three children deserted by his wife, who had run away, untrue to him. At last he found her, and brought her home. On his return to the army, he finds that now he has to bear here in the hospital the vicarious result of her fall. He came to me as a non-Christian struggling with the problem of forgiveness. Could he forgive her all this and his broken home? At last in Christ he found the power to forgive, and took up his heavy cross. He knelt at the altar of the little chapel and yielded up his life to God. Tomorrow he leaves the hospital to begin a new life.

"Here is a young Australian who was untrue to his wife. When we first saw him he was hardened by sin. That night he yielded to Christ. The next Sunday we knelt beside him at the Lord's Supper. He was a new man; his very face was changed. He said, 'I have read of miracles in the past, but there was never a greater miracle than the change which has taken place in my

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heart and life. I am a new man. I can look any one in the face today!' Beside him at that communion table knelt a young gunner, 'Joe' of the Royal Field Artillery. He was a strong, red-cheeked six-footer, winsome and good to look upon, the most popular in his battery. Away from home among bad companions, he was swept off his feet and fell. He has found Christ here among the prodigals in a far country. Before leaving, he came up to bid us good-by, saying, 'I'm going out to warn other men and to witness for Christ to the end of my days.'

'Here is M—, a young sergeant, who came up after the meeting, with tears in his eyes. 'Sir,' he said, 'I was never drunk but once in my life, when my pals were home on leave; and that once, under the influence of drink, I fell. Here I am in the hospital, yet I am engaged to a little girl at home who is as white as snow. What is my duty in the matter?' He has accepted Christ and is a changed man.

"Oh, it is a wonderful sight to see men transformed by this inward moral miracle, wrought by the touch of the living God."

Surely the Christ power is still a mighty influence among the sons of men. His religion of good news still stands the high test and is not found wanting. Jesus still saves from sin. In our next chapter we shall undertake to answer the difficult question *how*.

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author

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and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.—Heb. 12: 1, 2.

The Joy of the New Life

A devoted young soldier of France wrote home to his friends, "When the war is over and I go home, I must be a changed being. I shall have no right to be as I formerly was, or the lesson will have all been in vain. Through the war mankind must be reborn, and is it not our duty to be reborn first of all?" Here is keen insight as well as real consecration. He is quite right—mankind is being reborn through the war. The cosmic birth-pains shall not be in vain. It will be a better world, a safer world, a just, fair world. And again he is right—the first to be reborn will be the soldiers, the sensitive, devoted souls among them, and those whose lives are purged through suffering and forgiveness.

Doubtless the barbarity of war is hardening, embittering, brutalizing many; but its soul-testing discipline, on the other hand, is bringing other souls to the light, and these are legion. The crash and the strain of the cataclysm is still on; but some day it will end. And when victory comes, there will be more than the Great Release to celebrate. While the world is celebrating its final release from the threat of insane tyranny and the grip of the mailed fist, there will be many soldierly hearts returning home also with the joy of inner conquest, rejoicing that they have been victors through Christ over foes more subtle than those armed with Prussian steel. They will not rue the hardships or the wounds or the heartaches

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of exile, for in the sacrifice they will have found a Savior and the way to the new life.

In the early days of the Christian movement, there was a peculiarly keen joy among the comrades of the Jesus Way. It was not merely due to the closeness of their common life, made more intimate and precious by sharing the common dangers of persecution. It was due to the strangely vivid sense of God's presence, and their glorious new faith in the living Christ, and the change he had wrought in their lives. It was due also to the discovery that joy in the superlative degree is to be found only in some high consecration made in the spirit of sacrifice. There was a holy zest in sharing their Master's cross, and it brought far more joy than pain.

In the cooler tides of our modern faith emotion has doubtless been repressed. Lest feeling should dethrone thought and sweep us from our sober anchorage of ethics, we have feared to let our religion give vent to its joy. But the deepening experiences of hearts strained by war sacrifices, both at home and at the front, will surely generate religious feelings, worthy of the sacrifice, and we shall not be ashamed of them. And mingling with the new songs of high patriotism and the joyous battle hymns of coming victory, we already hear the grand old hymns of the faith, with their ringing notes of joy and peace. In such a mood nothing is more inspiring to our faith than the triumphant words of Paul:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge

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of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Rom. 8: 31-35, 37-39.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why is the cure of sin the severest test of any religion? How is sin like a disease? Why does it take more than penance to redeem from sin? Where does an evil habit get its power?

In what different ways is sin punished? Show how sin is its own worst penalty. What is remorse? Whom can even God not forgive? What makes forgiveness possible? What then must be the first step toward forgiveness and redemption?

What sort of habits are the most difficult to break? What physical results often follow bad habits automatically? What do you think of the policy of the American Army and Navy regarding the social evil?

How does Christ give a man the courage to try to live a clean life? If he saves men under such discouraging circumstances, is there any sort of man he cannot help?

CHAPTER VII

FINDING HOW CHRIST SAVES

What Being a Christian Means Today

By our stress upon the sin of immorality, in the last chapter, we must not be misunderstood as rating the sins of the flesh as worse than all others. Jesus very evidently did not. The sins of the spirit he dreaded more. Censoriousness and hypocrisy received from him far severer denunciation. He had great sympathy for human weaknesses, and large charity for sins of impulse; but cold, calculating, premeditated sins of an anti-social life aroused his righteous fury. Our complex social order has developed many kinds of sins against brotherhood which Jesus' love for fellowmen would strongly condemn. Our worst modern sinners are often immaculate in their personal life, quite free from the grosser immoralities, but hard as steel in their treatment of their brother men. Our social conscience has been slow in developing, but the past decade has awakened it, and public opinion has forced it to apply new standards of social right and wrong. President Hyde's modern definition of sin is a suggestive one. He calls it "*falling short of good will.*" The Christian, then, is the Man of Good Will. He is the Christ-Man, Jesus Christ's man, with a spirit of invincible good will toward all men and toward God. We think of God as the Infinite Spirit of Efficient Good Will. The Christian is the man in whom this Spirit dwells.

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For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.—Rom. 8: 14-17.

And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way.—Acts 19: 23.

Christianity, then, is simply *a way of life*, “the Jesus Way.” This was its first name, in the first century. It is not a method of worship, a form of creedal statement, an intellectual assent to a covenant, a belief in any magical effect of the blood of Christ or of the water of baptism. It is simply *living the Christly life*. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” “Christ in you the hope of glory.” Here is our simple Gospel of the Incarnation.

Redemption More Profound than Magic

Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual.
—I Cor. 15: 46.

Somehow the personal power of Christ saves men from sin. A discriminating writer with the modern spirit says, “His personal influence, his redemptive power, have been simply tremendous in the world—and never more so than at this very hour.” His is the great redemptive life of

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history, and his redemptive death on Calvary has challenged the world's wonder, love, and highest thought. The deepest plummets of the philosophers have tried to fathom it. Many explanations of the meaning of the Cross have satisfied multitudes of questioners; but no single explanation has satisfied all, or ever will. The *Fact* of the Cross looms larger than all theories about it. The glory of a sacrificial human life is a moral grandeur to be felt rather than coldly analyzed. Just what our friend's self-sacrifice does for us is difficult to describe; but the effect is very real. Likewise with our Savior's sacrifice. There is the great fact of world redemption involved in it. When the world looks at Calvary, its heart stops beating for an instant, appalled, enthralled, infused with moral vigor, inspired anew for righteousness. A new loyalty is somehow born. Somehow, in such a presence, sin shrivels and slinks away, and simple goodness thrives and grows courageous.

It is no idle curiosity that asks, "*How* does Christ save?" It is a devoutly earnest question, often asked but seldom answered. It deserves our most thoughtful study. To be sure, Christ's power to save does not depend on our comprehending the method. But many a thoughtful man has turned away reluctantly, disappointed by superficial explanations. Superstition can never satisfy a rational mind, especially a modern man with scientific training.

To begin with, we must be cautious of accepting magical theories, as well as mere literal dependence upon the words of Scripture. "The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life." Any superstitious belief, which disregards scientific laws of cause and effect, only pushes the mystery one step

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further from the light. It leaves us not only the original *fact* to be explained, but also the magical explanation of it. Jesus carefully avoided the reputation of being a mere magician. We must be equally careful to keep our religious beliefs free from magic. It is no more superstitious to believe that bread and wine actually become the flesh and blood of Christ than it is to believe that the actual blood of Christ transforms character and saves souls. Some would assert that the former is pure magic; many would say the same of the latter.

It is a barren literalism which stresses the *blood* of Christ as the secret of his saving power. The Bible always uses the term figuratively, meaning the essence of life, the symbol of sacrifice. To hold to this magical explanation satisfies only those who think of redemption as a mechanical rather than an ethical process. Perhaps a blood offering might satisfy an offended deity—if that is all there is to your idea of the atonement. But so physical a cause could not *make people good*. Moral results must have moral causes. It takes great moral energy to drive out sin. Whence comes this moral dynamic? No magical or purely physical theory really can explain for us the power of Christ to transform human character and save men from their sins. This is a spiritual process. We call it a moral miracle, it is so wonderful. It must have a moral cause. We must look for this cause in the personal influence of Jesus. We must study the way his teachings and his person, shown in both his sacrificial life and death, affect the minds of men.

It Takes More than One Cross to Make Calvary

On Calvary there were three crosses. Jesus did not

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suffer alone. It suggests that the sacrifice involved in our redemption must be a mutual matter. Superstitious theories of the power of his cross do not explain the saving power of Jesus. To find the secret of his marvelous power to lift men out of lives of sin, we must find out the train of moral influence which Jesus' sacrificial life and death cause in the world of men. We must begin with the cross of the Savior, or rather *the sacrificial love it symbolizes*, as the first cause of redemption. Men can hardly be saved from sin without this powerful moral motive. But we sometimes forget that other causes combine with this in the great process by which a soul is saved. It is evident that the Savior's sacrifice alone is not enough. The redeemed one must share the Redeemer's cross, or stay selfish and unsaved, in spite of Christ's sacrifice.

"The cross on Calvary alone
Can never save thy soul.
The cross in thine own heart and life,
'Tis that must make thee whole."

Without the cross of Jesus, the world would never have learned that redemption comes through sacrificial love. He taught the world the method and the process of the saved life, the redeemed character. Too many selfish people have complacently sung,

"Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe,"

and imagine that they have no responsibility about their own salvation, but that the cross of Jesus has somehow done it all. This is the most dangerous of all fallacies. The reason there are so many selfish, half-saved Chris-

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tians, so many half-Christian people, is that we have been letting Jesus do it all. All true Christians bear their own cross in the spirit of the divine Christ, who taught them the meaning of sacrifice and the joy of it. Dr. A. W. Palmer, of Honolulu, puts this fact with beautiful clearness:

“‘But,’ someone asks, ‘how does the spectacle of Jesus’ life of self-sacrifice culminating on Calvary make us good?’ Only by touching our lives with a divine purpose to live in the same spirit of self-sacrifice and join Jesus in his search for and service to God’s lost children. The world is not to be saved by Jesus alone, not by his three-hours’ agony on the cross merely, but by the thousands of men and women who themselves become saviors and give themselves unselfishly even as did he.

This young medical student is to hear the call of the deep-sea fishermen and give his life to the people on the coast of Labrador. This young woman is to respond to the need of the great city, and spend her life in the nineteenth ward of Chicago as a friend and helper of the foreigner and the forgotten. This young Scotch weaver is to die on his knees in the little African village, that slavery may cease and brotherhood be born. Thousands of nameless and humble souls shall, in the spirit of the cross, give themselves not to selfish ends but to unselfish service in cottages and hospitals and workshops. And so Christ shall be reduplicated in a myriad of saviors and the world be reconciled to the God who is a God of love. Thus the atonement—the ‘at-one-ment’—is continually and eternally in process.”¹

¹ “The Drift Toward Religion,” p. 62.

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Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.—Matt. 16: 24.

Jesus' Method of Saving Prodigals and Magdalenes

His very name means Savior. All through his life he was saving the lost, he was rescuing men and women from the wreck and ruin of their sinful lives. Says Dr. Fosdick, "Throughout the New Testament one never loses the accent of astonished gratitude, from folk who were once slaves and now are free, who from victims have been turned to victors. When Wilberforce's long campaign for the freeing of British slaves was at its climax, the population of Jamaica lined the shore for days awaiting the ship that should bring news of Parliament's decision. And when from a boat's prow the messenger cried 'Freedom,' the island rang with the thanksgiving of the liberated. Such rejoicing one hears in the New Testament. The disciples speak of the freedom where-with Christ has set them free (Gal. 5: 1); they say that they were dead and now are made alive (Rom. 6: 11-13); once overwhelmed by sin, they now cry, 'More than conquerors' (Rom. 8: 37)."²

If we would know *how* the spirit of Christ saves men from their sins today, we would do well to study his method of saving prodigals and magdalenes during his earthly life in Palestine. This may give us just the clue we need. Let us see first how Jesus won from a career of extortion the man Levi, whose Christian name was Matthew.

² "The Meaning of Faith," pp. 248, 249.

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And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and said unto him, Follow me. And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house: and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with the publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.—Luke 5: 27-32.

The publicans were the most disreputable business men of the day. They did the Roman Government's dirty work of squeezing tribute out of the Jewish people, and they were expected to do it on a graft basis. So they got all they could out of the people, paid what Rome demanded, and grew disgracefully rich on the balance. The Jews, of course, despised them. They were social outcasts. The religious people of the day scorned and ignored them, much as we treat saloonkeepers today. They were supposed to be the most hardened kind of sinners.

See how tactfully Jesus won this publican Levi. He overlooked the fact that Levi was not respectable or pious. He just met him as a man, in a friendly way. It must have surprised Levi to have such a man as Jesus notice him. They doubtless knew each other well, for they lived in the same town. Then when Jesus simply said to Levi, "Follow me," calling him to be his comrade, his disciple, Levi realized like a flash that Jesus had faith

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in him. Jesus' confidence that Levi was too much of a man to waste in the tax-squeezing business aroused Levi's faith in himself. He probably loathed the dirty work anyway, and was glad to leave it. "With Jesus' help, I can!" he must have said to himself. So he became the disciple Matthew, saved through Christ from his sins; and, long after, he wrote our Gospel of Matthew, doubtless from private notes he had taken himself from Jesus' teachings, with the same ink-horn he used at the publican's desk.

And he entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchæus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke 19: 1-10.

We find the same method here. Jesus befriends a sinful man who was not considered respectable. He shows

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Zacchæus he has faith in him. His confidence in the man's better self leads the man to venture to lead a better life with God's help. Thus Jesus puts moral energy into the man's life, and, in spite of the criticisms of pious sceptics, he saves the lost.

Early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst, they say unto him, Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her? And this they said, trying him, that they might have whereof to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. But when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more.

—John 8: 2-11.³

³ Though this story is not found in the oldest manuscripts, and is bracketed in the American Revised Version, we use it as a genuine incident in the life work of Jesus. It is so perfectly characteristic of him, it was in all probability one of the many stories of his life not preserved in the original gospels, but put in later, as too valuable to be lost, by a copyist of perhaps the fifth century.

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We see here the fine texture of Jesus' gentlemanliness. He is too courteous even to look at this disgraced woman and add to her embarrassment. After his piercing word, in a remarkably acute way, has scattered her accusers, he gives her his kindest sympathy. Somehow he instantly finds the best womanhood within her and appeals to it successfully. The discouraged woman needs no reproof from him; she feels the lofty purity of his crystal character. His kindness melts her completely, and when, in astonishment, she hears him say, "Go thy way; from henceforth sin no more," it puts new moral energy into her soul, and she says to herself, "With God's help, I can!" *Jesus' faith in her future aroused her own faith in herself*, and she went forth determined to live up to his high expectations. He had saved her from death, and worse than death; she must not fail him now!

How Christ Challenges the Best in Men

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.—Rom. 5:7, 8.

These three typical illustrations of Jesus' saving work reveal his method of personal evangelism. We see clearly how he saved the lost when he lived among men in visible form. Have we any good reason for doubting that his living Spirit, abroad in the unseen world about humanity today, is using this same method?

When a man reads with a wide-open mind the story of Jesus, his life and teachings, his sacrificial and triumphant

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death, or when this matchless story is rightly put before him, it puts a strange new moral energy into his life. Somehow it challenges the very best manhood there is in him and gives him moral courage to live his life. Feeling the warmth of Jesus' friendliness, the discerning sympathy of Jesus with his human troubles and temptations, and the confidence that Jesus has that he can live a better life if he will, it encourages him wonderfully. In spite of his moral failures, *he feels that the Christ of Calvary believes in him, and thought him worth dying for.* He feels Christ's faith in him, and it gives him suddenly a new faith in himself. Spiritual power flows into his life as he says to himself with inner conviction, "*With God's help, I can; for Christ believes in me.*"

"God Almighty wouldn't go back on even a thief like me, if he tried to live right," was the sudden revelation which came to a repentant burglar as he kneeled in Jerry McAuley's mission and the story of Christ found its way to his heart. A few months later Dwight L. Moody found this ex-burglar and one-time convict guarding the vaults in the U. S. Treasury at Washington, a trusted, respected, and self-respecting servant of his country. The Christ power had saved him from a misspent life and a hopeless future. It was the moral energy of a new-found faith that worked the miracle. But the faith that saved was not merely the man's faith in Christ, it was his discovery that Christ had faith in him. *Saving faith is a mutual faith which completes the circuit of the spiritual current of redeeming power.*

He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?
And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art

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the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.—Matt. 16: 15-18.

How Human Faith and Trust Help to Save Us

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.—Prov. 27: 17.

The marvelous response to this challenge of our best is seen even in our human friendships. We shall understand better how it works in the case of the great Savior from sin, if we think of its working on the lower levels of human relationships. Millions of boys can never outgrow their mothers' faith in them. It is what makes them men and keeps them straight. The memory of it challenges them to live constantly at their best, though they may be half a world from home. The recollection of a father's proud look of confidence in his boy and faith in his future, and the thought that that father's name is the name he bears, keep many a boy from stooping to do a disgraceful act that would besmirch the family name and cause his father shame.

No one has put more clearly the secret of this moral energy which saves men from sin than Donald Hankey, the soldier-author of the well-known book, "A Student in Arms." "Let us be frank about this. What a doctor might call the 'appetites' and a padre the 'lusts' of the

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body, hold dominion over the average man, whether civilian or soldier, unless they are counteracted by a stronger power. The only men who are pure are those who are absorbed in some pursuit, or possessed by a great love; be it the love of clean, wholesome life, which is religion, or the love of a noble man, which is hero-worship, or the love of a true woman. These are the four powers which are stronger than 'the flesh'—the zest of a quest, religion, hero-worship, and the love of a good woman. If a man is not possessed by one of these, he will be immoral."

Psychologically, the primary explanation of the fact Hankey states is the mastery of the attention. When the focal point of consciousness is occupied by a great loyalty, there is no chance for a petty or unworthy act to enslave the will. But constancy will fail, attention will flag, and temptation will at some unguarded moment pierce the vulnerable point in a man's armor, unless he is mastered by a mighty love. How is it that an absent wife in a far-away home keeps a man straight in the midst of temptations? It is not merely her love for him. That helps, but it cannot keep him safe. It is his responsive love for her. When that ceases to be vitally active, the man is in moral danger. The circuit of affection must be complete, or the grounded circuit means loss of moral, keeping power. Likewise her faith in him must be a constant challenge to his best. He must know that she trusts him and expects the utmost of him in a faithful and efficient life.

Even along the lower levels of human life, we see striking evidence of the power of faith to challenge the best that is in a man's heart. Dr. J. H. Denison, in his "Beside the Bowery," tells of the sudden effect of a

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woman's faith upon a drunkard's clouded mind, even in a moment of acute danger. He describes a tense scene in this drunkard's home when he demands money of his daughters, in order to go back to the saloon to prolong his debauch. When the money is refused him, he staggers toward the older girl with clenched fist and a menacing, murderous look. Quick as a flash the girl is saved from her father's violence by the swift intervention of a visitor who steps between them, with a quiet, "Good evening, Mr. Sanderson." It is the "Lady of Good Cheer," a Mrs. Rockwell, who is the blessing of the whole neighborhood. The reply the little woman got from the drunkard, whose designs she had for the moment thwarted, was like the roar of a lion at bay: "What're ye doin' here? Teachin' my girls to disobey their father? I'll teach you to butt in." But as he gave a quick lurch toward her, the little fearless woman, unflinching and calm, mastered him even in his maudlin condition, as she said quietly, with a straight, steady look, "Mr. Sanderson, I know you are a gentleman, and that you would never do anything discourteous to a lady." "A gentleman? Yes, sure I'm a gentleman!" he said, as he gave his shoulders a hunch and straightened up with a new dignity, followed by a maudlin laugh which belied his words.

In describing what followed another writer says, "The girls looked on, amazed that he had not struck down their visitor. He could hardly account for it himself. When he rushed at anyone with his huge fist poised, he was accustomed to see fear or rage in his victim's eyes, and then it was easy to strike. But in these eyes there was no trace of fear or rage, nor yet that more maddening expression of disgust or contempt. They were challenging

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him on a point of honor, as if they refused to accept him at his face value. They seemed to question and probe, but not to laugh at him. There was almost a reverence in them. He felt that she had found in him something that deserved respect, and it pleased him. He paid little attention to her words, but the sympathy in her voice arrested him. She was not fault-finding, as other women were. Vague images out of the past rose before his bleared eyes: the image of a white-haired woman by the fireside, whose hands were stretched out to bless him; the vision of a fair-faced bride who long ago had trusted him and believed him true.

The Lady of Good Cheer talked on of his home, and of little Nellie and of her disappointment that her birthday had been forgotten. . . . Before he could speak, she was inquiring in a tone of great sympathy how he had come to lose his position as a pressman, and to meet with such hard luck. There is nothing a drunken man loves more than to dilate upon his misfortunes, and Sanderson, willing to be beguiled, sank down on the sofa. He sprawled with his huge length over the sofa and she began to speak seriously and sympathetically of the life he had been leading. She told him plainly what she thought of his behavior, and he sat quietly and listened, although he would have knocked a man down for saying half as much. For he felt, that although she rebuked him, it was because she had found something in him she respected and trusted, and he recognized that she had a right to speak as she did. It was the same right which he had acknowledged in those who years ago had believed in him—the claim which faith and love always have over a man's life. The battle was won long before help came,

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and the girls were safe that night from terrors worse than death. On her way uptown the Lady of Good Cheer ended her account of the evening by saying: 'I don't care what you say! I like Mr. Sanderson. There's something that's really worth while at the bottom of that man's life.'"⁴

It is very clear that this fearless little woman succeeded in conquering the maudlin drunkard because she was a Christian and used most skilfully the simple method of Christ. She challenged the man's best, buried deep in his heart and his forgotten past, by her surprising faith in his manhood, his latent instincts of a gentleman. Her challenge arrested him, disarmed him, and won his respect.

The Moral Energy Which Saves Men from Sin

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.—
Phil. 2: 12b, 13.

After this discussion it should be clear to us that when Jesus saves a man, it is by arousing that man's cooperation in the redemptive process. Redemption is a mutual matter. *We are saved by Christ's sacrifice, plus our own. We are saved by our faith in Christ, plus his faith in us. We are saved by Christ's love, plus ours for him. And we are saved in a mutual service.* It is thus that moral energy flows from the divine Christ into human lives, by way of action and reaction, in an unbroken circuit of mutual interchange of moral motives, which brings, like the physical process of transfusion of blood, the strength

⁴ W. D. Hyde, "The Gospel of Good Will," p. 25.

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of Christ into the life that is aroused to its utmost spiritual capacity through loyalty to him.

The saving power of Christ's sacrifice is revealed in the response it gets in a human life. It is powerless to save unless that life also learns the lesson of self-sacrifice, takes up its cross, and follows the Christ. We say we are saved by our faith in Christ, and surely we cannot trust his saviorhood until we have faith in his power. But our faith in him is born of his faith in us. We trust him because we discover that he first trusted us, and found the best that was in us, and thought that we and men like us were worth dying for. Likewise we love him "because he first loved us." Yet his love alone cannot save us. It is only when it makes us *love him in return* that it has vital saving power. The electric circuit of dynamic influence must be completed first, before the moral energy can flow through it from his life into ours. Our love for Jesus, the response to his wonderful, undying love for us—even when we are wandering prodigals and wholly unworthy of him—grows into a deep, strong loyalty to him, to his matchless, radiant character, his perfect principles of life, and to himself, our dearest, truest friend. It is this strong loyalty which binds us to Christ with living bonds and makes it possible for his "keeping power" to keep us out of sin.

But what keeps a man loyal to his Master is the mutual service which is prompted by this mutual love. Many a Christian loses his grip on Christ, and falls back under the lure of temptation, chiefly because he does nothing in comradeship with Christ to make the world better. We Christians must be saviors, too. The more we share our Master's cross, the more we serve with him our

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brother men, the more we feel our partnership with his great enterprise of making this a better world, the steadier will be our loyalty to him, and the greater our joy in his saving friendship. Then sin, the great enemy, the great disease of the human spirit, will have no terrors for us. Then are we truly Men of Good Will, the comrades of the Christ-Man. To us and our comrades he will say:

Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.—Rev. 1: 17b, 18.

To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.—Rev. 2: 17b.

I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.—Rev. 3: 11, 12.

And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.—Rev. 22: 3, 4.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What do you think it means to be a Christian? What is meant by calling the Christian "the Man of Good Will"?

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What do you think of Jesus' redemptive life and death? How does the thought of Jesus' cross affect you? In what direction must we look to find the *moral energy* in "the saving power of Christ"?

What does the sacrificial love symbolized by the cross mean to you? Why did Jesus tell his disciples they too must take up their cross? How does Jesus' cross stimulate our self-sacrifice?

How did Jesus induce Matthew the publican to give up his sinful business? What do you learn about Jesus' method of saving sinners from the story of the sinful woman in John 8? In all such cases, to what did Jesus make his appeal? How did he give them new moral energy to live a new life?

Explain the strategy of Christ's always challenging the best in a man. How does this brace a man to do his utmost?

What effect does a mother's faith in her boy have upon him? What four forces in a man's life does Hankey say are the only things that can keep a man straight? Show how devotion to a great cause helps a man morally.

Are we saved by our faith in Christ, or his faith in us, or both? How does sharing his cross bring moral energy into our lives? If we help save another, how does it help us? Is a man still selfish really saved?

CHAPTER VIII

DISCOVERING GOD IN THE CHRISTIAN'S BIBLE

The Bible a Book of Life

The Bible seems to be a deathless book. The average book does not survive the third anniversary of its printing. The Bible is likely to live forever. The average book sells less than 1,000 copies. The Bible, year after year, always leads the "best sellers," and in the year 1912 there were 28,000,000 copies of it printed, in about 500 languages and dialects. It is the only book printed in every known language which human beings speak. As the anvil wears out many hammers, the Bible has survived many persecutions. It was never more read and studied than today. Millions make it their daily guide. There must be a reason for all this. It is because *there is life in the book, and men find God in the book*. This makes it the most inspiring, the most instructive, the most comforting book in the world. Accurately speaking, the Bible is a library rather than a book. Its sixty-six books were originally separate rolls of sheepskin or papyrus manuscript, written by very many known and unknown writers, during a period of over a thousand years. It represents the cream of the literature of the Hebrew race.

"The Bible is the word of life," says President Wood-

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row Wilson, "I beg that you will read it and find this out for yourselves—read, not little snatches here and there, but long passages that will really be the road to the heart of it. You will find it full of real men and women not only, but also of the things you have wondered about and been troubled about all your life, as men have been always; and the more you read the more it will become plain to you what things are worth while and what are not, what things make men happy—loyalty, right dealing, speaking the truth, readiness to give everything for what they think their duty, and, most of all, the wish that they may have the real approval of the Christ, who gave everything for them; and the things that are guaranteed to make men unhappy—selfishness, cowardice, greed, and everything that is low and mean. When you have read the Bible you know that it is the Word of God, because you have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness, and your own duty. . . . I am sorry for the men who do not read the Bible every day."¹

No man can do justice to the Bible's influence in the world, and its service of humanity. It has been praised by a multitude of writers, but none is eloquent enough to do the subject justice. Even Theodore Parker, who used to be called "the arch-heretic of New England," paid it this tribute: "This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other. The literature of Greece, which goes up like incense from that land of temples and heroic deeds, has not half the influence of this book. It is read of a Sabbath in all the ten thousand pulpits of our land. In all the temples of religion is its voice lifted up

¹ "Some Words of President Wilson About Religion," p. 6.

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week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar and colors the talk of the street. . . . It blesses us when we are born, gives names to half Christendom; rejoices with us, has sympathy for our mourning; tempers our grief to finer issues. It is the better part of our sermons. It lifts man above himself; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man about awaking from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death angel by the hand and bid farewell to wife and babes and home. Men rest on this their dearest hope; it tells them of God and of his blessed Son, of earthly duties and of heavenly rest.”²

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
And light unto my path. . . .
The opening of thy words giveth light.

—Psalm 119: 105, 130.

Not a Magical Holy Book, but a Part of Human History

The Christian's Bible is not like other holy books. It did not drop from the skies, a full-grown mystery. It was not magical in its origin, as is claimed of such holy books as the Koran and the Book of Mormon, and the sacred writings of the Oriental faiths. The great founder of

² “Discourse on Religion.”

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Islam, when he first published the Koran, claimed that every paragraph and syllable in it was a divine revelation, dictated to him orally. It is a dull, stupid book, with contradictions here and there; but nevertheless Mohammed claimed that Allah was its sole author, and he himself only the amanuensis.

That strange literary mixture, the Book of Mormon, the holy book of the Church of Latter Day Saints—or the Mormons, as the world calls them—also claims a miraculous origin. It was given to the world by Joseph Smith, the first Mormon. Smith claimed he translated it with the help of God from mysterious writings engraved on certain gold plates which he had dug up on his farm in New York State. They who were willing to accept his strange story believed there had been a great miracle wrought, and revered his holy book; but the sceptical wondered why no one else had ever seen those gold plates, and why Smith buried them again as soon as he had copied their message, also why he did all his work of sacred translation behind a screen, where even his best friends could not witness the process!

The Christian's Bible differs from all other holy books in this respect. It claims no miraculous origin. It tells us no miracle-story of its own production. It yields to the most searching investigation of its history. It submits to the keenest questioning of its contents. And it has survived all its criticism, just as much loved and appreciated, and far better understood than ever. We love the Bible all the more when we discover that it was a natural product of history, a part of the great evolution of human life. Though we find God in it, and though some of its messages are the sublimest and most inspiring in all liter-

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ature, we can truly say it is a human product. It is not a sanctimonious fraud like the Book of Mormon, making unnatural claims about its own origin, but a genuine human document, or series of documents, direct from life.

The fact that Jesus Christ lived a human life in Palestine made it possible for him to interpret God to men and to sympathize keenly and genuinely with human needs. Likewise the fact that the Bible is a vital part of human life and history greatly enhances its usefulness. We can approximately date most of its writings. We can identify most of its authors. We can usually learn their motives and purposes in writing. We can discern in their writings the living background of their message and the throbbing human struggle which gave it birth. We feel these heroic men of the far past to be kindred spirits with ourselves, and in their noble life efforts we discover inspiration for our own life work. We should be deeply thankful for our Bible, with its myriad human contacts.

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah.—Amos 7: 14-16a.

“The teachers of Israel were real, living men, steeped in the life of their times; their thoughts and ideas and sentiments were in vital relation to those of their time, even when ahead of them and differing from them. Inspired many of them undoubtedly were, but *superhuman they were not*. Now when the Bible is thus discovered

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to be a vital part of human life, it becomes a living book. It ceases to be mechanical, it is not a supernatural machine produced in some laboratory in the sky. It is a natural flower grown on earth, but only possible because the Sun was shining in the sky. If upon that nation of old the Sun of Righteousness had not arisen, and if the human spirit had not drunk the divine influences, then this Bible garden could not have been."³

Is it not clear, then, that a holy book of the "supernatural" type would be a dead book, but that a human Bible is a living book? The former is a mere pious machine, the latter is a book of life.

Useless Claims Which Our Bible Never Makes

Many thoughtful people have been so perplexed about the Bible that they have been unable conscientiously to retain their early views regarding it, and, failing to get the constructive modern viewpoint, have lost, through neglect, its great strength and comfort for their lives. Their study of modern science compels them to reject the scientific allusions in the Bible. Their Christian conscience compels them to object to the ethics of the early portions of the Old Testament, such as its condoning polygamy, wholesale slaughter, human sacrifice, and other forms of tribal ethics. Their common sense compels them to abandon any theory of "verbal inspiration" as mechanical and impossible, and with this, the infallibility of the *words* of Scripture. Their sense of proportion rebels against such indiscriminate use of verses of the

³ T. Rhondda Williams, "Shall We Understand the Bible?"

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Bible, as concedes equal authority to all parts of the Bible, regardless of authorship. So they politely, and usually silently, neglect the Bible as an old-fashioned, outworn book.

It should be said frankly at once that these people are needlessly perplexed. They are simply confused by what people have *said about* the Bible, not what the Bible claims for itself. The Bible makes no claim to have been verbally inspired. It gives us no mechanical theory of its own origin, which would class it with other holy books like the Koran and Book of Mormon. The Bible makes no claim to be a book of science. It is no more of an authority on geology and astronomy than it is on modern medicine, and it makes no claim to be. It is *a book of religion*. Its specialty is *righteousness and the will of God*, and all its great messages are on this greatest of all subjects. It would be unnatural to expect any greater scientific wisdom from the Bible writers than was common to the best thinkers of their own age. No one in those days dreamed of the Copernican theory of astronomy nor of the modern discovery of the circulation of the blood, and it would have been highly unnecessary as well as unnatural for a book of religion to have known about either, centuries before their discovery.

Nor is there any claim in the Bible writings that all parts of this very diverse literature are of equal value, so as to warrant indiscriminate quotation. Jesus himself puts his teachings above certain Old Testament laws. Foolish, indiscriminate quotation has caused a great deal of trouble and has made the Bible a dangerous book, at certain times in history. It is well known how our southern slaveholders quoted the Old Testament to justify

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slavery "as a divine institution." The Mormons defend polygamy from the same source. The burning of 100,000 witches in Germany in a single century was due to an Old Testament law which required that no sorceress should be suffered to live. A certain law in Leviticus condemns to death any one who does not worship Jehovah. This was held to justify the Spanish inquisition and the horrors of the Reformation persecutions. Many petty sects have been founded on the literal interpretation of some isolated passage of Scripture, regardless of context, authorship, and the broader teachings of Jesus. All of this is a grossly unfair abuse of the Bible.

As soon as we recognize that *the Bible grew*, that it was a book of life, a part of human history, these difficulties are quickly resolved. We then see the various parts of the whole in their true perspective and proportion. We no longer expect more of the older portions than the facts justify. We are not surprised to find that in the crude days of patriarchal and tribal history, many centuries before the light of Christ, even the best of men lived rough, crude lives, with low moral standards, and with cruel and often brutal instincts. We should not be surprised at this, for those were the days of barbarism. If these earlier writings of the Bible had not been a true reflection of the moral and social conditions of their own times, we should doubt if they were genuine. It is the best proof of their genuineness, that they do not gloss over the rough, immoral character of their early heroes, but paint them as they were, rough men in rude barbarous times, centuries before our Christian civilization. The Christian Scriptures of the New Testament, however, present to us the highest moral standard the world has

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ever known, and Jesus frankly asserts that this standard is to take the place of the lower and more primitive standard of a thousand years before.

Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time. . . . But I say unto you . . . (Matt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43.) Compare with Deut. 5:17; Exodus 20:13; Deut. 24:1, 3; Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; 19:18—Old Testament laws which Jesus declares obsolete and needing improvement.

Let us make no claim for the Bible which it does not make for itself, and we shall save ourselves many perplexities.

The Rich Variety in the Bible's Messages

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold
Wondrous things out of thy law.

—Psalm 119:18.

When once we discover that this great book of life is not all on the dead level, we find more and more *variety* in the writings of the Bible. We discover there all the literary forms from statute law to lyric poetry. The gospels woven together make the most wonderful biography in all literature. The book of the Acts and the books of Samuel and Kings are ancient history. In the pre-historic writings of Genesis we find traditional folk-lore, hero tales like the stories of King Arthur, like the glory tales of Germany and Spain. The book of Psalms is the hymn book of the Jewish Temple. The Proverbs is a collection of the practical sayings of the wise men which

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were household proverbs, current among the Jews long before they were ever written. Leviticus and Deuteronomy give us the Hebrew statute law upon all subjects. Here and there we find great allegories, like Jonah and the Prodigal Son; and Esther and Daniel are historical romances based on great characters in the past, with a great motive power to encourage the Jews in the Maccabean period. One of the greatest of dramas is the book of Job with its message on the deep problem of human suffering. The Song of Solomon is a lyric love song. The Revelation is a wondrous vision of a spiritual seer. Ecclesiastes is a pessimistic reverie reminding us of the Rubaiyat of Omar, and written, as has been suggested, "not by a great saint, but by a great sinner." Paul's writings are precious personal letters to his friends, and the books of the prophets are collections of sermons and patriotic orations which have continued to stir the religious feelings and the conscience of the world for many centuries.

All varieties of literary forms are there, and we Anglo-Saxons, practical-minded and prosaic, failing to catch the poetic temperament of these Oriental writers, poets and seers, have tried to interpret them all alike, by the rigid rule of literal, legal matter-of-factness, all on the dead level! No wonder our blunder has brought us confusion and perplexity.

Dr. A. W. Palmer very suggestively describes this variety in the biblical material: "The Bible is not a book. It comes nearer to being a library. If you were to take Green's 'History of England,' 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'The Idylls of the King,' a hymn-book, the Constitution and the common law, Phillips Brooks' sermons, 'Poor Richard's

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Almanac,' the letters of Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Richard Carvel,' the life of Abraham Lincoln, Bacon's essays, 'Paradise Lost,' and Shakespeare's plays, and bind them all in one volume, you would have in English literature something that would be comparable in scope and variety to the Bible. Only you would have to print these books solidly—without sentence, paragraph, or chapter divisions. You would have to print the poetry as prose and the plays without any indications of scenes or speakers. Then have this solid mass chopped up into chapters and verses. Then bind the book in limp, black leather, put it on the center table where it can be easily dusted, and educate the people to believe that it is all Bible, all prose, all to be taken literally, all of equal authority as the infallible word of God, and you have for English literature something equivalent in form, matter, and meaning to what our Bibles are in relation to the literature of the Hebrews."⁴

The Wonderful Romance of the Bible's Life

We are apt to forget that most ancient literature is lost forever. In all languages we read about more lost books than time has preserved for us. The Greek and Latin classics now extant are but a small remnant of the great literature of ancient Greece and Rome. Most of the books of the wise Egyptians, the leaders of early civilization, were long since burned, buried, or otherwise destroyed. For a book, a living echo of a human voice long still, to be preserved through twenty centuries, is a miracle of affectionate care and undying appreciation.

⁴ "The Drift Toward Religion," p. 34.

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When we read, in the book which reports the great messages of the prophet Amos,

Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.—Amos 5:24,

we have a message that has come to us unscathed through twenty-eight centuries, nearly three millenniums, and we are forced to ask the question, In the midst of the wreck of ancient libraries, and the loss of ancient literatures, *why have these Hebrew treasures been preserved?* The answer is simple. They have lived because they deserved to live. Otherwise they would have died of neglect. But, in the providence of God, human hearts loved them, treasured them, and preserved them, that future generations might possess them.

We seldom stop to think that the art of printing is a modern invention. The printing press rescued the Bible from its precarious life in manuscript; but that was less than five centuries ago. Through eighty-five per cent of its long history, the Bible was treasured in the form of hand writing, laboriously copied letter by letter by the hand of loving scribes. The first book printed was the Latin Bible. Twenty years before that time, it was taking Wycliffe's scribes ten months to make by hand, with paper and ink and goose-quill pens, one complete copy of the Bible in English. The great Bible publishers now print beautiful editions of the Bible at the rate of two or three copies every minute. The early English printers and translators, William Tyndale, Myles Coverdale, and John Rogers, did the English race a great service in furnishing that nation several editions of the Bible from

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1525-1537, in their own mother-tongue, thus bringing it within reach of rich and poor alike, though Tyndale and Rogers were soon burned at the stake as martyrs to the Protestant cause.

Some three thousand manuscripts of the Bible, in the original Hebrew and Greek, may still be found, mostly in the great libraries of Europe. They are precious relics of the centuries before the age of printing, when the Bible lived only in handwritten form. These are the most valuable books in all the world, especially the oldest of them, the three that date back probably to the fourth century. These three priceless manuscripts are, strangely enough, shared by the three branches of the Christian Church. The Alexandrian manuscript may be found in the British Museum in London. The Vatican manuscript is in the Pope's library at Rome. And the Sinaitic manuscript, so called because it was discovered (in 1844) in an ancient monastery on Mt. Sinai, is in the royal library at Petrograd, the greatest treasure of the Eastern Church. The writer has seen one page of the precious "Codex Vaticanus." So carefully is it guarded, its binding has been broken, and visiting scholars at the Vatican are allowed to study but one page at a time, lest the precious book be stolen. Even then, it must be examined under glass, and no ink is allowed to come near it. Photographic reproductions of these three great manuscripts of the Bible may be found in the leading libraries of the world, where scholars may study them, every page having been photographed, page by page, and then printed from electroplates.

The reason we have no copies of the Bible earlier than the fourth century is that before that time the early

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Christian writings were doubtless usually upon papyrus, a fragile sort of paper made from reeds and rushes, which did not long survive. A few fragments, however, of these papyrus books, containing some of the teachings of Jesus, have been discovered in the Nile valley, long preserved in the dry sands of Egypt. These fragments, now in libraries in Oxford and London, carry us back very close to the time of Christ. They suggest the form of the earliest gospels, just sayings of Jesus, without story connections, which were used by the apostles in their missionary travels to enable them to quote the exact teachings of the great Master.

How the Bible Grew

As we said above, the Bible grew. It was produced in a very natural way. The Old Testament, the Bible of the Hebrew Church, is the sifted result of centuries of religious writing and speaking. The oldest of the Old Testament books in their present form is probably the book of the prophet Amos. In his day the shrines at Bethel and Jerusalem must have had copies of the "Book of the Covenant" and the other simple codes of primitive laws which form the core of our present books of Hebrew legislation. Ancient chronicles were also in existence which became the basis of the books of biblical history; and ancient folklore in the form of proverbs, psalms, and fragments of epic and lyric poetry, which later were woven into the fabric of the Old Testament writings as we now have them. Countless stories of the patriarchal, tribal past were orally transmitted through the years. The beating heart of the Old Testament—the books of the prophets

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—we find begins with Amos the herdsman-seer of Tekoa and Bethel. The earlier prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, spoke only for their day; but Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and the rest of the later prophets, after giving voice to their great messages which had such influence in their own lifetimes, decided to preserve these messages for the future by putting them in writing, so sure were they of the eternal truth of what they taught. Then followed the great literary period of the Hebrew faith, during which all the precious writings which had come down from the past, in the form of law codes, psalms, proverbs, chronicles, prose, and poetry, were combined with the oral traditions and carefully edited—thus producing our present Old Testament.

The story of the New Testament origins is much simpler. The Bible of Jesus, of Peter, John, and Paul, was of course simply the Old Testament. The New Testament began with Paul, in the most natural possible way. He just wrote a letter to his friends at Thessalonica, in the little church he had founded there, to encourage them in the midst of persecution, to give them further instruction about matters that were troubling them, especially about the life to come, and to tell them of his joy in hearing, through Timothy their mutual friend, of their steadfastness in the faith of Christ. It is just a friendly letter, full of messages of kindly sympathy and wise and helpful teachings—but it began our New Testament. We call it the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. Soon after came another letter to the Thessalonians, then to the Galatians, the Romans, the Christians at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc.; and so precious were these letters, the churches made copies of them and exchanged with the

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Christians in the other cities, until each church had most if not all of these noble letters of the great apostle. These sacred messages from their great friend and founder, full of instruction and holy memories, came to be read at their meetings on the Lord's Day, as Sunday was then called, and thus came to be a regular feature of Christian worship.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.—Luke I : I-4.

Meanwhile the gospels were being written. So long as living men could remember the face and form of Jesus and recall the very scenes and incidents of his wonderful life story, which they had shared with him, there was no need of writing that story. But as one by one these men died, many of them suffering the martyr's death, it became evident that someone must write the story of Jesus, or the world would soon forget him. Matthew, the converted tax-gatherer, had evidently used his pen and ink-horn to good purpose while he traveled as a disciple of the Lord, for an early tradition tells of the "Logia of Matthew," which seems to have been just written notes of Jesus' most precious sayings, like the papyrus pages

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recently found in the Nile valley, which we mentioned above. This collection of Jesus' teachings was used by Mark, Matthew, and Luke, to help them to write accurate accounts, each from his own viewpoint, of the life-work of their great Master. We call them gospels, which means good news, because they have given to the world the most wonderful story ever told, the best news ever brought to men.

In the course of the first century the other New Testament books were written and a great collection of writings followed, by the early Christian scholars, some of them almost equal in value to parts of the Bible. These are included in the "New Testament Apocrypha." For centuries the books of the Bible were not bound together in a single volume. They were kept in separate manuscript rolls. And it was not easy to determine exactly what writings should be included in the Bible and what should be left out. Some thought the letters of Clement and Barnabas were as helpful as Second Peter or Jude. It was not until 1546 A. D. that the question of "the canon" was finally settled for the Catholic Church, when the Council of Trent voted to fix permanently the contents of the Bible as we now have it. It is interesting to remember that the chapter headings, the marginal references and footnotes, and the chapter and verse divisions were not in the ancient manuscripts. The division into verses was first used in the Geneva Bible, printed in 1560. They were arranged by Robert Stephen on horseback while on a journey from Paris to Lyons. Only shortly before that time Cardinal Hugo had originated the chapter divisions, for greater convenience in his Latin Concordance.

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Our American Standard Revision is the most accurate translation of the Bible in English. It is the latest of ten successive English translations, made necessary by the natural changes in the language, and by later discoveries in biblical scholarship. For instance, the three greatest manuscripts, mentioned above, were all found after the King James Version, our "authorized version," was translated. The influence of these ten English versions of the Bible upon the history and literature of the Anglo-Saxon race is beyond all computation. It is safe to say that the Bible has been the greatest moulding influence in our history, creating our ideals, and largely controlling our national conscience and our destiny.

Finding God in the Bible's Best

Men come back again and again to this old Bible, so wonderfully preserved through the centuries, because *they find God there*. The purpose of the Bible might be thus concisely stated: "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). "The eternal value of the Bible," says Rev. T. R. Williams, "is in the clearness, the fulness, the richness, the certainty of that idea of God, which lifts this literature into its place of supremacy in the literature of the world."

We find God in the remarkable story of the Hebrew people. With all their wanderings and follies, their greatest leaders were men who knew God and were guided by his will. As we read the Old Testament we are constantly reminded of the hand of God in history. Often they misunderstood him and misinterpreted his will. Often

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in the ancient story, the picture of Jehovah which the early writers give us is not like the Christian's God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This was simply because such men as Abraham, living in crude and primitive times, could not know God as well as we with the Christian light now know him. It is in the Bible's best that we find God. We find him with Elijah on the mountain as he hears the still, small voice which sends him back to duty. We find him with Isaiah in the Temple as he listens, awe-struck, to the message which calls him to prophetic service, while the air of the temple-spaces becomes vibrant with spiritual energy, and the very threshold seems to rock and tremble.

We find God in the tender passages of the Psalms, revealing the quiet experience of men whose hearts responded to God's guiding presence. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters, he restoreth my soul." We find him in the heroic experiences of the prophets. We see him stand by the side of Amos as he confronts the priests of a corrupt shrine at Bethel, and by the side of Elijah as he dares confront the coward Ahab, and of Nathan as he dares rebuke King David. We find God dwelling in the hearts of his people and transforming their character. See him change Moses, from a cringing exile and self-confessed fugitive murderer, into a man of power, a trainer of a race of slaves till they become a nation, a man of leadership and vision and self-control. Somehow God made Moses the greatest character in ancient history. See him change Peter from a profane fisherman of Galilee, erratic and self-assertive and superficial, yes, even cowardly when danger came,

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into the leader of the pilgrims of the Jesus Way, a man of deep conviction and strong faith, fearless before governors and kings. Supremely, the Bible shows us God in the person of Jesus the Christ. The Old Testament converges toward him; the New Testament radiates from him. He is the climax of the Bible's story and the summit of its revelation of God. His teachings set the standard for our judgment of all the other writings in the Scriptures. They stand or stand aside as they agree with his crystal teachings and his perfect life.

Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me.—John 5:39.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In what sense is the Bible a "book of life"? In what does its unique value consist?

How does the Bible differ from such mysterious "holy books" as the Koran and the Book of Mormon? Were the writers of the Bible superhuman?

Does the Bible claim to be infallible, or verbally inspired? What is the danger of indiscriminate quotation, which assumes all parts of the Bible to be of equal value?

What do you think of the variety in the Bible's messages? Mention some of the different kinds of literature in it.

How did the invention of the art of printing affect the Bible? How was it preserved before that time? How long did it take Wycliffe's men to copy the Bible by hand? Why are there no manuscripts earlier than the fourth century?

What is the oldest book of our Old Testament in its

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present form? Who began the New Testament? Which book was first written? For what purpose? Why does Luke say he wrote his gospel? For a long time how were these separate books kept? When was it finally settled what books belonged in the Bible and what did not? Why have so many English revisions been necessary?

What is the greatest thing you find in the Bible? Which books mean the most to you, and why? In what Bible characters do you find God's influence most clearly?

CHAPTER IX

DISCOVERING IN THE BIBLE GOD'S METHOD WITH MEN

The Inspired Men behind the Book

After our discussion in the previous chapter of the nature of the Bible and its romantic history, we are now ready to consider the question, "In what sense is the Bible inspired?" Very little is said in the Bible about inspiration. Most of our ideas about the subject come from other sources. The word inspire means literally "inbreathe." The old-fashioned idea was that God so breathed his Spirit into the writers that the Bible as they wrote it became an infallible book, incapable of error because practically written by God. This theory was partly based on the translation of II Tim. 3:16 in the King James version, which reads, "Every scripture is inspired of God. . . ." Without discussing this much mooted verse, we note in passing that the American Revised Bible renders it thus:

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."

Whatever Paul meant by this sentence, it is certainly true that the Bible nowhere teaches that God dictated to the writers of the Scriptures what they should write.

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In the exact sense of the term, no book is inspired. It is *the men back of the book*. We find *inspired lives* rather than inspired writings. This is the clear teaching of Scripture, and in accordance with the facts of life. Let us look at the following passages:

For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.—II Pet. 1:21.

But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer.—Acts 3:18.

Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently . . . searching what time . . . the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them.—I Pet. 1:10, 11.

But there is a spirit in man,
And the breath of the Almighty giveth them
understanding. —Job 32:8.

It is clear from these passages that the prophets were thought to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the last of these suggests what was meant by it. God's "breath" somehow gave them understanding; that is, God's influence touched the spirit of the man and gave him wisdom. This is simply saying what we tried to say in chapter one, that *the living God can make known his will to living men*; that *the Spirit of God can dwell in a human life*. "The idea of inspiration," says J. Paterson Smyth, "is by no means exclusively Jewish or Christian. The classical authors frequently speak of the 'divine frenzy,' or 'afflatus,'

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of 'being borne along by God,' being 'God-inspired,' etc. Artistic powers and poetic talents, gifts of prediction, the warmth of love, and the battle frenzy were all ascribed to the power of the god possessing the man inspired. These ideas and words afterwards passed over into Christian theological language, and necessarily influenced in some degree the conception of inspiration in the early Church."¹

How God Inspired the Herdsman of Tekoa

It is clear, then, that inspiration has to do with life, not with a mechanical matter like writing. It is also clear that the men referred to as inspired men were the prophets, the men who "spoke for God." Perhaps we shall best understand the process of inspiration if we take a specific case, like that of the prophet Amos. He was evidently an ordinary sort of person, a poor shepherd living in the rough, arid wilderness of Tekoa, southeast of Jerusalem, eking out a living with the help of some sycamore-fig trees, the poorest kind of figs that were cultivated. He spent most of his time alone with his sheep, under the open sky; but with occasional visits to the city, probably to market his produce. In the quiet of the open country, God taught Amos of himself; in the town he learned of men. In the rural school of God's presence, he discovered the sublime, majestic holiness of the Infinite One. In the town, Bethel, the commercial and religious capital of the northern kingdom, he saw the hypocrisy of the priests, the inhumanity of the king, and the wickedness of the people, especially the social injustice of the rich.

¹ "How God Inspired the Bible."

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This startling contrast between God and men taught Amos his duty. God gave him courage, and the burden of a great message. He felt his responsibility, because no one else was voicing that message.

So we find this brave herdsman bursting in on the smug self-content of Jeroboam II and his priests and nobles at Bethel, as suddenly as Elijah appeared before Ahab. To them he was only a nobody, and his confident "Thus saith Jehovah" aroused first a smile, and then their wrath. His torrential eloquence swept away all opposition till he had uttered his message. God had made his message clear to him, and he gave voice to it with fearful emphasis. The woes he pronounced upon princes, priests, and people must have blanched their faces and made them tremble! After describing in scathing language their godless life, he called them to repentance:

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.—Amos 5: 14, 15.

Then the vials of his contempt are poured out upon the faithless priests of the city, whose hypocrisy is partly responsible for the sins of the people. Speaking for Jehovah, he declares:

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard

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the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.—Amos 5:21-24.

Of course he was driven from the city by the angry priests, and he was lucky to escape with his life; but he had fulfilled his duty, he had delivered the message he believed God had given him. He had unburdened his soul. Henceforth the sins of the people of Bethel were on their own consciences, not his; for he had taught them Jehovah's will. In this story, a true story of a human life lived twenty-eight centuries ago, we see what is meant by "inspiration." God had touched this man Amos with his divine Spirit. He had somehow put in his heart the sacred fire of a great message, and it burned within him till he uttered it. The faithful preaching of that earnest man of God may or may not have brought to repentance the people who heard his living voice; we do not know. But certainly his message, echoed by many other voices all through these centuries, has brought his challenge of social righteousness and genuine religion to myriads of men. We know the man's life must have been inspired, that God must have been back of his words, because we feel the inspiration of his message for our own lives and for our generation.

The Age-Long Contest between Priests and Prophets

This story of Amos and his message interprets the Old Testament. The prophetic movement is the heart of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the saving of the Hebrew

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race and the Hebrew faith. Compared with the majestic character of the prophets, the priests and kings and wise men were mere pawns and puppets. It was through the prophets, appearing at uncertain intervals, but when most needed, that Jehovah taught and led and saved the Hebrew people. They are the most truly inspired men of the Old Testament. It is then no wonder that their writings are the most inspirational portions of the Scriptures, beside which the legal and narrative portions are dull and prosaic. It should be said, however, that some of the Psalms and parts of the historical books were written by prophetic writers. They are easily distinguished from the portions written by the priests, which comprise "the priestly code."

Through much of Hebrew history there is plainly seen a long-continued struggle between the priests and the prophets. The rivalry between the professional religion of the priest and the vital religion of the prophet was perhaps quite natural. It is hard for an hereditary priesthood not to become corrupt. It is easy for a religion expressed mainly in ritual and burnt-offerings to become purely formal and soon a hollow mockery. Again and again, in unspiritual generations, the efforts of the priests degenerated into merely keeping up the machinery of religion, keeping the Temple open and the ritual running. In their eyes, the chief sin of the people was not a wicked life but neglect of tithes and vows and offerings in the Temple. From this formality the step was short and easy to the condition where the priests themselves lived immoral, irreligious lives. Then usually God sent a prophet!

The prophet was not professionally pious; but he was

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personally religious, and he had a vivid sense of God and duty. Sometimes he lived with men (like Isaiah), sometimes not (like Elijah); but he always lived with God. Almost always he was a man of the open country. God seems to make seers more naturally under the stars and among the wide spaces and the far mountain visions. The twin passion of all the prophets was God and righteousness, especially social righteousness. Whatever text the prophet began with, he preached on *social justice among men, demanded by a righteous God*. The most wonderful passages in the Old Testament are the flaming texts of these prophetic sermons, which burned their way into the consciences of the Hebrews and often put faithless priests to silence in self-condemned dismay. Listen to this arraignment of the hollow rites of a priestly religion, by the prophet Isaiah, as he champions the religion of the prophets:

Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes

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from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.—Isa. 1: 10-18.

Isaiah, one of the finest books of the Old Testament, is full of such inspirational passages, uttered at white heat by a man afire with the sense of God in his life. To Isaiah, God was the most real of all persons, and His will was righteousness and justice among men. The same was true of all the noble succession of inspired prophets. Isaiah was the prophet among the princes, and the prince among the prophets; but the message of Micah, the prophet of the poor, was essentially the same:

Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?—Micah 6: 6-8.

Space forbids further quotations. Suffice it to say that these inspired men of the Old Testament, who preached

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true religion many centuries before Christ, were the vanguard of the Christian apostles; and John the Baptist, Jesus of Nazareth, and his apostles were the prophets' successors. The teachings of Jesus give us so clearly the accents of the prophets, especially his words on social justice and his woes against the Pharisees, that it must be that he himself found great inspiration, as a boy on the Nazareth hillside, in studying these flaming messages of the grand old heroes of his ancestral faith. It may be that he even caught from the ancient prophets the outlines of his marvelous vision of the Kingdom of Heaven, which he made the great goal to challenge the faith of the future.

God's Progressive Revelation to Discerning Seers

This brings us to the conclusion that the Bible is the record of God's progressive revelation to the world of men. We have seen that it is not homogeneous in its material nor uniform in its value. It is almost as variant in its religious value as it is varied in its literary form. The degree of its inspirational quality, in different portions, varies widely. The priestly writers were far less inspired men than were the prophets; and the ages of the patriarchs and of the tribal judges were not as favorable for religious progress and lofty spiritual messages as was the golden age of the inspired prophets.

The Father God has always been ready to reveal to men his will and the power of his loving presence; but he has never been able to do it except when men cooperate. Gradually he has evolved in human history a succession of discerning seers capable of hearing his messages within their souls and thus learning his will,

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that they may teach their fellowmen. Through the long slow centuries, these men were few, their vision of God was imperfect, and their hearts were poorly attuned to his inner voice. Hence the divine revelation in the tribal days was crude and imperfect, and "there was no frequent vision." Religious experience and the faith-sense have been matters of gradual growth among men, so God's revelation to us has necessarily been progressive, from meager beginnings. With the advent of the greater prophets, however, God found discerning seers whose spirits were wonderfully synchronized to his quiet messages, until in the person of Jesus Christ he found one whose perfect spiritual intuition enabled him to apprehend God's truth so immediately that he could say with simple accuracy, "I am the Truth." So we find Jesus to be more than a prophet, though he had the prophetic spirit and the prophetic passion; for God's Spirit dwelt within him so intimately and perfectly he could truthfully say, "I and the Father are one." This is the great incarnation.

God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son.—Heb. 1:1, 2.

The Problem of Life: The Generation and Use of Power

From this climax of our discussion, the consummation of God's purpose through inspired lives, found in its perfection in the person of the Incarnate Christ, we now turn back once more to our own personal needs and our human experience. It is our hope to discover what value this

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great fact of inspiration holds for us, and how we may share in the religious experience of the ancient prophets.

It seems almost trite to remark that the constant problem of life is the generation and use of power. We do not need to be devotees of the religion of force to accept this fact, for there are other forces than brute force. *Power is fundamentally moral and ultimately personal.* Yet we must constantly think of the analogy of physical forces, even when thinking in terms of the spiritual. I have a vivid memory of one June morning, years ago, when my friend, to whom this book is inscribed, introduced me to the marvels of a new hydro-electric plant at "Deer Rips" on the Androscoggin, which he as an electrical engineer had just completed. With justifiable pride he showed me the mighty machinery, generating electrical energy to the amount of 20,000 horse power, with marvelous precision and freedom from friction, and the high-tension wires over which this energy was transmitted for service miles away; and he explained how all this power was derived from the high levels of the river by converting the water power into the more mobile electric current, adapted to the needs of men.

The primary process in our religious life seems to me much like this hydro-electric miracle. Somehow, in the midst of the boundless resources of our divine environment, we must generate power. In God we live and move and have our being, and his personal power is limitless. *We must capture the high tension power on the high levels of life and thus make our personalities effective.* In many a commonplace life there are dammed up vast unused energies. These stored energies must be released. Then it is clear that the next great problem of life is to

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conserve and harness and apply the energy we have thus generated, and over some sort of invisible high-tension wires to carry it to a field of human service. All this involves most keenly the personal challenge which thousands of Christian men are feeling today in the pressure of the times. In the providence of God our boys, by the hundreds of thousands, are experiencing a rebirth. It is nothing less than that. The new and tremendous responsibility which has fallen upon our American young men, especially in the decade of the twenties, has developed suddenly a new manliness, a deepened sense of duty and of the privilege of serving their country. They experience a keen joy as well as a sobering sense of burden, as they feel this great nation leaning hard upon them. For thousands of the boys this means not merely the rebuilding of physical efficiency to a point of high perfection. It means the rebirth of the soul. They face a mighty chance for service. They have made a solemn consecration. You can see it in their faces and in their whole demeanor. These soldiers of the new crusade are challenging the rest of America's manhood *to live the soldierly life at home*, whether or not we shall be needed "over there." They challenge us to live the maximum life, the life of maximum spiritual power, for the greatest possible efficiency in service, whatever that service may be. In meeting this challenge, every Christian man will turn to his Bible with the most earnest question, *How?*

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.—Eph. 6: 10, 11.

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The Bible's Greatest Lesson: A First-Hand Touch with God

It is a great experience when a man is sure he has found God in the Bible. But too many of us stop there. If we do, we have not yet found the greatest value in the Bible. If we believe God really spoke to the hearts of Moses and Elijah, Amos, Isaiah, and the rest, we have only begun to have faith in God. Must we think he has spoken to no one since? Must we believe that God was more really in the world in Bible days than he is in our wonderful world today? Must we believe that he wrought miracles only then, and that the age of miracles is past? We recognize that marvelous help was given to the heroes of Bible days for their struggles with evil. Must we meekly allow that such help is not for us and ours? We see evidence in the lives of the faithful prophets that God dwelt in their hearts and gave them power, made them "inspired" men, who did great deeds of spiritual valor for God and fellowmen. *But must we sadly believe the prophets have no successors?* Has their noble line died out in all the earth? Cannot God's Spirit dwell in *our* lives as well, and make us men of power?

"If I thought," writes T. R. Williams, "that some supernatural aid was given to Paul, which cannot be given to me, then I could only say that he was too far away to give me any help; he is in the clouds and I am on the earth. But if I find that Paul struggled with passions and prejudices and weaknesses and opposition and imperfect knowledge, just as we do, and yet rose to such heights of victory, I see up along the mountain of moral obligation a shining track of possibility for me; and though the rocks are up there, and the precipices; though

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there will be storms and mountain torrents; still, since Paul said, 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,' I may too. The Power which availed for him will avail for me, and I can link my feebleness to it, as he did. The heroes of the Bible had no help, either to live or to write, which you may not have."²

It is folly to imagine that the splendid unity of God's world and of his personal relations with his children has ever been broken. The God who was with Isaiah and Amos in a vital partnership of service can be our Comrade God today. There are not "two dispensations"; there is only one. Our God is the same as always. He has never changed his method of approach and communion with men. Surely he is just as fully in the world as ever he was. His presence broods over our prairies and mountains and far-sweeping shores just as truly as over Bethlehem's plain, Mt. Olivet, or the shores of Galilee, in the land of long ago. We may not be willing to accept Mr. Wells' theory of a "becoming God," a growing God, and we need not; but certainly we should not imagine that our God grows *less* with the passing of the years, restricted in his activities, limited in his access unto men! "Is the Lord's hand shortened that he cannot save?" Plainly it was only a gross failure of our fathers' faith when they found the age of miracles only in the Bible, and heard God's voice speaking only there. God will speak to the discerning heart today just as surely as ever he spoke to discerning seers in the days of the Hebrew prophets.

² "Shall We Understand the Bible?" p. 85.

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It is refreshing to find in Dr. Palmer's "The Drift Toward Religion" a beautifully clear statement of this same conviction. At the end of his chapter on the Bible, he says, "The great thing which the Bible can do for our religious life is not to present to us an artificially preserved message from God to which we can go to learn his will. It is rather so to present to us the spectacle of other men in other days hearing his voice and finding help in his presence that we shall be inspired to follow their example and open our lives to the indwelling of his Spirit. We also are to be responsive to his still, small voice and go out into our world to find every common bush aflame with God. *The supreme value of the Bible is not merely to find God there, but to gain inspiration to find him here.* Each age must renew for itself something akin to the experience recorded in the Bible."

And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the minister of Moses, one of his chosen men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. And Moses said unto him, Art thou jealous for my sake? would that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his Spirit upon them!—Num. 11: 27-29.

God's Method of Making Men Who Can Wield His Power

It is clear that the life of power is the life that lets God in. When infinite Power gets into a human life and dwells there, that life must grow, and grow strong. It

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cannot help it. Human weakness means a life that leaves God out, that reckons on getting on without him. Whether it be an ordinary man on the street, or a Bonaparte, the reckless neglect of God is a fatal weakness, too dangerous to risk. But God within means power.

The Bible shows us the method. It introduces us to ordinary men of the sea and of the soil, fishermen, farmers, very ordinary men like Peter the impulsive and profane, John the impetuous and vindictive, Moses the fugitive murderer, and Isaiah the courtier; and then shows us how these men let the living God into their lives, and then outgrew themselves marvelously, till we hardly recognize their former selves in the splendidly heroic personalities God helped them to become. After years in obscurity and exile in Midian, Moses found God, and at the same time found a life mission. God's Spirit entered his soul, and soon he began to outgrow the cabined life that he had lived for years; and with the larger life came larger powers. Against all but impossible odds he was able to lead out of bondage a race of hereditary slaves, and so train them, practically alone with God's help, that they became a nation, and ere long a mighty people. This exploit made Moses, the Midian fugitive, a failure at forty, into the greatest personality of antiquity.

And so it was with the fishermen of Galilee, the comrades of Jesus. At his trial and crucifixion, Peter was an arrant coward and John was a plain slacker. But in a very few days both men had wonderfully changed. They became bold and fearless defenders of their Master and eloquent preachers of the Jesus Way. The change was as complete as it was sudden. It must have seemed to their friends miraculous. See them healing the lame man in

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the Temple in the name of Jesus! Hear them publicly arraigning the Jewish leaders for crucifying so good and great a man as Jesus of Nazareth! See them, when brought before the Jewish supreme court, refusing to be muzzled, and declaring they must obey God rather than men! In doing these brave things, they took their very lives in their hands, and were lucky to escape alive. Where did all this courage come from? The Jewish leaders discovered the answer. "They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." And they marveled, for they perceived that they were ignorant and uneducated men. More than that, they believed that the Spirit of Jesus was still living, and was with them as he promised. From Jesus they had learned the method of the life of spiritual power. As he had let God's Spirit in, till it filled his very soul, and made possible his wonderful life, they likewise opened their hearts to this Spirit of power. In a real sense they became *Christ's men*, for they reincarnated his spirit in their lives. He lived anew in them. And soon after at Antioch, the people began to call them and their friends Christians—the people with the Spirit of Christ in their lives. At first it was a nickname, an epithet of shame; then it was welcomed as a title of honor, and it has stuck to Jesus' friends ever since.

Thus the Bible gives us the method. To say that it is the method of a lost art is to paralyze your faith. It is sheer atheism to assert that the God who could make men of power out of Moses and Peter in the far past can do so no longer with modern men. What God has done God can do. He is doing it every day. The son of a Welsh miner and the son of a Virginia country parson, both of them earnest Christian men, are merging their more than

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kingly power to direct the world's destinies today. Both are men of humble faith, confessedly depending for daily strength upon the power which comes only through prayer. If we read our Bibles to as good purpose as they, we too shall keep open the channel between the divine life and ours, and shall daily welcome God's Spirit to dwell in the holy of holies of our lives. Thereby, and only thus, we too may become men who can wield the power of a God-filled life.

Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. . . . But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. . . . But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard.—Acts 4: 13-20.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What do you think is meant by the inspiration of the Bible? Does the Bible anywhere say that God dictated to the writers what they should write? Would you call the book, or the men back of the book, inspired?

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What makes a man "inspired"? How did Amos get his burning message? Why do you think he wrote out his messages for future generations?

Why were the prophets the rivals of the priests? What can you say of the conflict between them? Does Jesus' teaching remind you of the priests or the prophets?

Why does the value of the Bible books vary considerably? Show how God had to depend upon "discerning seers" in each generation, to reveal his will to the world.

Why is the generation and use of power so vital a problem in life? How can we capture "the high tension power on the high levels of life"?

Is it enough for us to discover that God spoke to men long ago? Why not? If God "inspired" men then, why can he not do so now? Are there really two dispensations or only one?

CHAPTER X

DISCOVERING IN PRAYER OUR WAY TO GOD AND HIS TO US

The Naturalness and Universality of Prayer

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion;
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
O thou that hearest prayer,
Unto thee shall all flesh come.

—Psalm 65: 1, 2.

Some one has said that if a visitor from Mars should come to inspect our human civilization, the most perplexing thing which would come to his attention would be to see men, and sometimes great companies of men, shut their eyes and talk to a person invisible. If so, our Mars-being would be something very different from a man, for, in the world of human nature, prayer is so universal it seems to be instinctive. It is not easy to find a man who has *never prayed*. The real question is not, Why should men pray? but Why *do* men pray? For in times of distress and danger, when our human weakness and insufficiency are painfully apparent, all men pray. Sudden danger, an unexpected look into the yawning death chasm, a miraculous escape with its fleeting glimpse of eternity so near, will wring prayers from the lips of infidels. There is plenty of new evidence that even the profanest, rough-

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est soldiers are suddenly made human and devout in the awful chaos of battle when only God seems sane. After a terrific battle in the Civil War an army chaplain asked a wounded soldier if he ever prayed. His frank reply was, "Sometimes. I prayed last Saturday night, when we were in that fight at Wagner. I guess *everybody* prayed *then*."

A great college teacher in his textbook on Psychology says, "We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should or should not pray. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we *do* pray. The reason is, we cannot help praying. It seems probable that all that 'science' may do to the contrary, men will continue to pray to the end of time."¹

Never to pray would be something less than human. Never to be conscious of a higher power to whom we may look up in gratitude, in upward striving, in hunger of spirit, in loneliness of soul, in longing for help, strength, and protection, is to place ourselves on the level of the brutes. *Anthropos*, the old Greek word for man, probably means "the upward-looking-one." In a double sense, both physical and spiritual, this is man's highest distinction.

We are the only creatures God has made for the upward look. Prayer, then, so universal, so instinctive, so characteristic of humanity, is the badge of our royal birth-right as sons of the King. We alone are on speaking terms with God.

"Our justification for calling prayer natural," says Dr.

¹ James, quoted by King, in "Fundamental Questions," p. 71.

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Fosdick, "may be found in part in the *universality* of it. In some form or other, it is found everywhere, in all ages and among all peoples. The most discouraging circumstances do not crush it, and theories of the universe directly antagonistic do not prevent it. Buddhism, a religion theoretically without a God, ought logically to exclude prayer; but in countries where Buddhism is dominant, prayer is present. Confucius, a good deal of an agnostic, urged his disciples not to have much to do with the gods; and today Confucius is himself a god and millions pray to him. Before the tendency to pray all barriers go down.

The traveler climbs the foothills of the Himalayas, and among the Khonds of North India hears the prayer: 'O Lord, we know not what is good for us. Thou knowest what it is. For it we pray.' The archeologist goes back among the Aztec ruins and reads this prayer in affliction: 'O merciful Lord, let this chastisement with which thou hast visited us, give us freedom from evil and from folly.' The historian finds the Greek world typical of all ancient civilization at least in this, that prayer is everywhere. . . . One hears Plato, 'Every man of sense, before beginning an important work, will ask help of the gods.' And turning from Plato's preaching to his practice, he reads this beautiful petition, 'King Zeus, grant us the good whether we pray for it or not, but evil keep from us, though we pray for it.' If today one crosses the borders of Christianity into Mohammedanism, he will find formal prayer five times daily when the muezzin calls . . . and if one looks to the Hebrew people, with what unanimous ascription do they say, 'O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' . . . A man is cutting himself

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off from one of the elemental functions of human life when he denies in himself the tendency to pray."²

Why Prayer to a Comrade God Is Natural to Men

When we ask the question *why* prayer is so natural to men, we find the answer in our natural relationship to God. He is our Father. Our spirits are made in his likeness; that is, we can think and feel and choose and suffer and serve, as God can. In a sense we are a part of his infinite life, for "in him we live and move and have our being." We call out to him in prayer just because we are his children; we should be very strange, unnatural children if we did not. Because of this close relationship with God, he can understand us, and we can grow to understand him. Communion is possible between us. In a very real sense, God's life is incomplete without the help of men. He developed the human race, as the crown of his patient creation, to share his plans and his labors. Some things even God cannot do without the help of men. The relationship is so close it has even been described boldly as like that between the tree and the leaf, which gathers sunshine for the tree from which it draws the vital forces which give it life; or like the bay and the ocean, so vitally connected that twice a day the bay reaches far out to sea with its beseeching ebb tides, and in response the mighty flood tides of the ocean flow back upon the bay, restoring its life, filling all its pools and channels and lifting it to higher levels.

With this intimate thought of our relationship to God, prayer seems the most natural thing in the world for us.

² "The Meaning of Prayer," p. 9.

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It is no wasting of words upon the wind, staggering heavenward like dying sparks from the embers of our hearthstone fire. It is the real interflow of power from our Father God in response to our human call. As Dr. Palmer suggestively puts it: "If you have grace to receive it, God does not *hear prayer*—he *feels it!* The yearnings of our souls reach directly into the life of God. The connection between our lives and his is as real and immediate as that between two wireless stations tuned to receive each other's wireless messages."³ The men to whom prayer is most natural are those who find God to be a true Comrade of the way, who feel his unobtrusive Presence as a constant fact in life. To such men, prayer is no long-distance telephoning to a foreigner in another world, but simple, friendly conversation with the nearest and most intimate of all friends.

He is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being.—Acts 17: 27b, 28.

The Tragedy of a God Who Is Deaf

And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that

³ "The Drift Toward Religion," p. 29.

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Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.—I Kings 18:25-29.

This story gives us one of the human tragedies of the Old Testament. The picture of these men praying agonizingly to a god who cannot hear, is a pathetic scene. Urged on by the taunting, mocking words of the prophet Elijah, they grow frantic and desperate in their endeavors to make Baal hear. But Baal is deaf! Or perhaps he is off on a journey, or gone to sleep, or just in a reverie, careless of the cries of his worshipers, suggests Elijah. Of what avail is prayer to such a god? This is the pathos of paganism, while millions pour out their souls before stone-deaf idols, praying to gods that do not care.

But our Father God is not deaf. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." And he is always a God who cares.

"Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and Spirit
with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than
hands and feet."

When God was thought of as a transcendent Jehovah, enthroned far away in a paradise of eternal glory, but

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having little to do with this mundane life of ours, except through occasional angels, it must have been hard to believe in prayer. It would be hard to make such a God hear, if he was so far away. I have a good deal of sympathy with the sceptics of a century ago, who could not make the cold logic of the mechanical creeds of those days seem reasonable. But it is easier today to believe in the reasonableness of prayer. God has been brought near to us. He is a Comrade God who shares our life. The Gospel of his presence in his world has vitalized religion. It interprets religion as the life of God in the hearts of men, and it makes prayer the channel through which the divine life enters human consciousness and makes that union possible.

What Prayer Meant to Our Master

Of the physical life and appearance of Jesus we know little. Whether his health was vigorous and his strength abundant, we know not; but we do know he became fatigued by his nerve-taxing work and was sometimes exhausted at the end of a day of life-sharing service. He evidently did not spare himself. He had a great heart, and he poured out his sympathy unstintedly. To meet day after day the variety of human sufferers that came to Jesus for help and healing would have taxed the nervous energies of any but the marble-hearted. He had a way of putting *something of himself* into the life of the sufferer, who went away happy as well as healed, cured in both body and spirit. Such life-sharing, self-giving, always costs. It costs both spiritual energy and physical vitality. It was evidently so in the case of Jesus. Once we are told he "perceived that the power proceeding from

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him had gone forth," or, as the old version gave it, "that virtue had gone forth from him" (Mark 5:30). He was more than physically tired; he was nervously depleted and spiritually overtaxed. *His reservoir of energy needed recharging from the source of spiritual and psychic vitality. So he prayed.* On one occasion, after a day of great stress in the midst of a clamorous multitude that sought his help, we are told, "He withdrew himself in the deserts and prayed" (Luke 5:16). The results, after such experiences of communion with his Father, were quite apparent. Sometimes after spending the whole night in prayer he was more rested than after a long night's sleep. He had renewed his mental vitality, had regained elasticity, poise, spiritual insight, and power. The self-renewing processes of prayer had revitalized his will and strengthened his consciousness of God's presence and his conviction of harmony and oneness with Him. Thus was restored his wonderful peace, the perfect equilibrium of a placid soul, regardless of all the surgings of trouble and enmity and danger without. Jesus could never have borne his great lonely burdens without this restoring of his depleted energies and personal resources through prayer.

It is significant that we are especially told of his praying just before any particularly taxing or important task. The night before he took the momentous step of choosing his twelve apostles, the men whom he should train to bear the great responsibility of projecting his saving mission into human history, we are told:

He went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples; and he chose

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from them twelve, whom also he named apostles.
—Luke 6: 12, 13.

It is plain to be seen that the recovery of spiritual power at midnight in Gethsemane made possible the triumphant victory next day on Calvary.

And he came out, and went, as his custom was, unto the mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was parted from them about a stone's cast; and he kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. And when he rose up from his prayer, he came unto the disciples, and found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray; that ye enter not into temptation.—Luke 22: 39-46.

This glimpse of the prayer life of the Master is full of significance as we study it. Notice we are told *it was his custom* to keep this prayer-tryst in the quiet of the night on Olivet. Notice that the process involved in the prayer struggle was *to get his will perfectly in harmony with the will of God*. Then conflict ceased and peace was won. Finally, notice the result of his prayer. So greatly was he strengthened in spirit, as the tides of God's power flowed in upon his soul, it seemed as though a divine mes-

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senger must have visited him. Thus prayer, the prayer-habit, in the life of the Master, was the secret of his great spiritual vitality and of his conquering life.

Spiritual Energy Released through Prayer

Always the example of Jesus is more eloquent than his words. Seldom if ever do we find him teaching the *duty* of prayer. He just revealed to his disciples, unobtrusively, the *privilege* of prayer. After they had watched him closely for awhile, and finally discovered in his prayer-life one of the chief secrets of his power, they said to him, "Master, teach us to pray"; and, with wonderful simplicity, he ushered them into the presence of his Father and taught them to talk and think and feel with the Comrade God. Let us try to realize for our lives what this meant to them. Herein is *the real dynamic* of the Christian life.

Most men know all too well that they are living below the level of their possible best. Occasionally we are conscious of unused energies within, imprisoned by some sort of inhibition, be it fear or guilt, reticence, selfishness, laziness, or a half-in-earnest life. Somehow we are not half the men we know we ought to be. Perhaps it is just a lack of moral courage, a "self-suggestion of inferiority" which kills our faith that God can make of us men of real power. We need to be prodded into spiritual ambition, ere we settle down into a shameful contentment with middle-aged mediocrity.

Somehow the stored energies which are dammed up in our commonplace life must be released. Somehow we must capture the high-tension power on the high levels of life, to make our personalities more effective. All

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about us are the spiritual resources of the infinite God. These personal forces, both human and divine, can be released through prayer. Let no one imagine for a moment that this is simply "pious talk," or an unreal play with empty words. The psychologist, with no taint of the professional religionist about him, will frankly admit that there is vast potential power in prayer, whether or not he prays himself. That great teacher of teachers, William James, of Harvard University, in 1907 read a paper on "The Energies of Men" as the president's address before the American Philosophical Society, in which he spoke of the positive power of prayer, and paid a high tribute to its reality and its rightful place in a rational life. In a regretful mood he was speaking of the difficulty of being both critically keen and warmly religious, and he remarked: "Few scientific men can pray, I imagine. Few can carry on any living commerce with God. Yet many of us are well aware *how much freer in many directions and abler our lives would be, were such important forms of energizing not sealed up.* There are in every one potential forms of activity that actually are shunted out from use, reservoirs of energy that are habitually not tapped." In another place, this same psychologist says: "Prayer is religion in act; that is, prayer is real religion. It is no vain exercise of words, no mere repetition of certain sacred formulæ, but the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence. *The conviction that something is genuinely transacted in the prayerful consciousness is the very core of living religion.*"⁴ After such strong words from so

⁴"Varieties of Religious Experience," p. 485.

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great a thinker, let no one imagine that prayer is only superstition.

Let another distinguished psychologist, Dr. Hocking, successor to Professor James at Harvard, give us a vivid sentence explaining the process of prayer: "*God (in prayer) has given to the man something of himself. By just so much as the ultimate meaning of things becomes present to him, by just so much he is capable of bringing new values back to earth, as an enhanced quantity of being in himself, as a renewed grasp of the quality of the goal.*"⁵

Down in the holy of holies of your inner life, there dwells with you the Holy Spirit of the living God. Amid the buried treasures of your sub-conscious life he dwells, with all the forgotten scenes and thoughts of all your personal life, the mental and spiritual lore of your past experience, stored up for eternity, but buried now far below the surface of your active thought-life. Here are your sources of possible power, here the roots of latent, unused energies, unrealized psychic power. Prayer is the communion of this your deepest self with the God who dwells within. Commit to God the direction of these unused resources. In confident faith, through the habit of prayer, trust him to develop in you these latent powers. *The result will be a growing life.* You will outgrow yourself. A new efficiency, a spiritual energy will develop within you, which will give you the joy of conscious power in a useful Christian life.

The growth of this super-self through prayer begins with a mental concentration which focuses the mind on God. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Think-

⁵ "The Meaning of God in Human Experience," p. 375.

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ing intently of God and his moral qualities and life purposes helps the man who prays to become more like his God. Submission to God's thought and God's will is the organizing idea in prayer, under the dominance of which auto-suggestion produces great results. Auto-suggestion is the spiritual process of mobilizing personal forces within one's own life. What this mobilizing accomplishes, Professor Coe describes in these illuminating sentences: "Prayer is a way of getting one's self together, of mobilizing and concentrating one's dispersed capacities, of begetting the confidence that tends toward victory over difficulties. It produces in a distracted mind the repose that is power. It freshens a mind deadened by routine. It reveals new truth, because the mind is made more elastic and more capable of sustained attention. Thus does it remove mountains in the individual and through him in the world beyond."⁶

Prayer, then, cannot be thought of as a passive state of mind. It is intensely active. It is dynamic. It generates spiritual power. It releases the spiritual energies of your life and mine. *It provides the channel by which God's unwearied strength and untiring patience can enter our souls, and make us men of power.* Yes, there is a "Super-Man"! He is the man, any man, who has let the Spirit of God into his life, and daily gets new power through prayer. Such a man was Abraham Lincoln. Few Americans started with more meager resources or a poorer chance; but he faithfully made the most of both, and then trusted God for the future. He believed strongly in the Providence of God, and he had great faith in prayer. The result was, he grew; he progressively outgrew him-

⁶ George A. Coe, "The Psychology of Religion," p. 315.

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self. And thus the boy born on the clay floor of the barest kind of a mountain cabin became the most beloved President of a great nation, liberator of slaves, savior of the Union, respected by all the world. The secret of the miracle of his growth he modestly reveals in these words, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go; my own wisdom and that of all around me seemed insufficient for the day." Through the help of God in prayer Lincoln became a Super-Man.

I will give thee thanks with my whole heart:
Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee.
I will worship toward thy holy temple,
And give thanks unto thy name for thy loving-
kindness and for thy truth:
For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy
name.
In the day that I called thou answeredst me,
Thou didst encourage me with strength in my
soul.
—Psalm 138:1-3.

Religion as Friendship on Speaking Terms with God

Reduced to its very simplest terms, the religion of the Comrade God is *friendship*. The good people whom the world has strangely named "Quakers," call themselves "Friends." There is no better or truer name for Christians. *The simple religion of Jesus is the practice of friendship.* The Church, historically, has been rather grandiloquent about it, and has added many layers of complex interpretation and elaborate ceremonial. But this has been like silver-plating gold—or gilding the per-

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fect flute to get a sweeter note. Whatever other religions may be, the heart of the religion of Jesus is friendship. We are too prone to make Christianity the religion *about Jesus Christ*. Let us rather think of it as *Jesus' own religion*, the religion by which he lived so heroically and died so triumphantly. What we need, to make us really Christians, is the vision and spirit and method of Jesus our Master. His *vision*, alluring, compelling, was the coming Kingdom of Heaven, the Democracy of God, a world of friendly comrades of the Jesus Way. His *spirit*, self-forgotten but strangely powerful, was sacrificial love. His *method* was friendly sympathy, expressed in service and life-sharing, while the overflowing life he shared found its eternal springs in God. His followers are they who have caught this vision, share with him this spirit, and are living by this method, whether they call themselves Christians or not.

And there arose also a contention among them, which of them was accounted to be greatest.—
Luke 22:24.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.—Matt. 20:25-28.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his

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life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends. . . . These things I command you, that ye may love one another.—John 15: 12-15, 17.

But this religion of friendship finds its inspiration and renewal through our mutual friendship with God. The language of this friendship, its means of intercourse, is prayer. We call it communion because it mingles our thoughts with the thought of God. This habit of familiar prayer puts us on speaking terms with God. He is no longer a foreigner to our world or a stranger to our hearts. He becomes, through prayer, our familiar friend. We understand him better, and his wishes for our lives, the more we pray to him. The peril of not praying lies in this: The time will surely come when sudden crisis will overwhelm our hearts, and instinctively we shall cry out to God in instant prayer. But how shall we then pray to him, if we have not for years been on speaking terms with him? Yes, we may; but such a prayer, after years of silent neglect, will be quite different from the prayer of a constant friend. The great result of the habit of prayer, however, is not insurance against sudden emergencies, but the permanent and vivid sense of God's presence as a vital factor in our life. This idea of prayer, as *friendship vocalized*, is far above the thought of mere begging. Its purpose is not the getting of special favors; true friendship's purpose never is. The great gift of God's friendship, realized in prayer, is just *himself*, his comforting, strengthening Presence. As George Matheson prayed, "*It is thee, and not thy gifts, I crave.*"

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The privilege of prayer, from this intimate viewpoint, is beautifully expressed in these words of Sir Wilfred Grenfell, quoted by Dr. Fosdick: "In the quiet of home, in the heat of life and strife, in the face of death, the privilege of speech with God is inestimable. I value it more because it calls for nothing that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot give—that is, the simplest expression to his simplest desire. When I can neither see, nor hear, nor speak, still I can pray so that God can hear. When I finally pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I expect to pass through it in conversation with him."⁷

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most
High

Shall abide under the shadow of the Al-
mighty. . . .

Because he hath set his love upon me, there-
fore will I deliver him:

I will set him on high, because he hath known
my name.

He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;

I will be with him in trouble:

I will deliver him, and honor him.

With long life will I satisfy him,

And show him my salvation.

—Psalm 91: 1, 14-16.

The World-Reach of United Prayer

Naturally our idea of prayer depends upon our idea of God. The outreach of prayer depends upon the scope of God's presence and his power. Whatever may be the

⁷ "The Meaning of Prayer," p. 40.

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virtues of telepathy, the success of wireless telegraphy has killed skepticism about the possibility of long-distance messages. We can now send messages by wireless, thousands of miles over land and sea. It would have been an astounding miracle twenty years ago. It is now only a daily commonplace. A wireless message sent around the world ere long would surprise no one. It will depend upon the construction of instruments with sufficient projecting power.

The projecting power of a human prayer is the strength of its "dominant desire"—that is, the measure of its faith. We have no standard unit by which to compare our faith, except the mountains of difficulty it can overcome. In these days the obstacles which challenge faith loom high and reach far. They compel us to look to the strength of our "dominant desire," to seek dynamic for our faith. We shall find this dynamic in our belief in God, a Comrade God who is both near and far, whose Presence is a vital factor wherever human spirits dwell. We may be sure the Father God goes with his children. If the outreach of our prayer depends upon the outreach of our God to carry it, we may give free scope to our "dominant desire"; for wherever there is need of help, our God precedes our prayer.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.

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If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
And the light about me shall be night;
Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
—Psalm 139:7-12.

There is great comfort here for anxious parents whose boys are far away in these days of sundered families and war-time separations. What would such men and women do now without the solace and strength of prayer! They can only pray for their boys. But they *can pray*. And because the God to whom they pray, with his boundless life, is *both here and there*, with the same infinite compassion in expressing his efficient good will there where the boys are in danger, as here where he hears the parents' prayer, we may pray with great confidence in the world-reach of our prayer. Even to those who thought they did not believe in God or prayer, this sort of crisis has forced new faith.

A letter from Scotland speaks of the change in the village infidel, brought suddenly to such a faith, and tells of his coming to the kirk with his great new sense of need, unable to keep back the tears, as the pastor prays for God's help for the king's forces fighting overseas in France: "It was then that my friend stifled a sob. There was Something after all, Something greater than cosmic forces, greater than law—with an eye to pity and an arm to save. There was God. My friend's son was with the famous regiment that was swaying to and fro, grappling with destiny. He was helpless and there was only God to appeal to. There comes an hour in life when the heart

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realizes that instinct is mightier far than logic. With us in the parish churches of Scotland the great thing is the sermon. But today it is different; the great thing now is prayer."⁸

Thus the war is bringing to many in these days a new sense of the reality of intercession. There seems to be constantly increasing now the volume of Christian intercession, with a world-reach, and a mighty longing winging its faith. It may be that the world in its Gethsemane will fathom new depths in its experience of prayer, even as it has sounded new depths in its capacity for suffering and for sacrifice. At least our faith is likely to rise to this emergency, equal to the challenge put upon it. The War-Time League of Intercession is enlisting thousands in daily, united prayer to God, that, if it be his will, victory may come to our nation and its allies; that our leaders may be given wisdom and guidance; that our dear ones in the conflict may be preserved and protected; and that all who labor, or suffer, or sacrifice in any service of the great cause may be granted divine blessing. Our complete faith in the righteousness of our cause will determine the faith with which we can join in this united intercession. The duty of Christian patriots is clearly in line with such daily petition. And as, from the twenty-three nations, unselfishly leagued together in this vast struggle for the world's freedom and future peace, the volume of incessant prayer rises more and more confidently, *the spiritual resources of the universe will more and more be enlisted against our heartlessly inhuman foe*. The moral forces of God's universe will ultimately win this war, and united prayers of inter-

⁸ "The Meaning of Prayer," p. 4.

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cession may have a larger part therein than sometimes we imagine.

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why do men pray? Did you ever know a sane person who never had prayed?

What makes communion between God and men possible? What sort of people do you think find prayer most natural to them?

What do you think prayer meant to Jesus? What special reasons for prayer did he sometimes have? To what extent was the prayer habit the secret of his life power?

Why did his disciples ask him to teach them to pray? Why cannot we make prayer the real dynamic of our lives, as Jesus did? How does prayer actually mobilize the forces of our life? Who then is the "super-man"?

What does it mean to you to be "on speaking terms with God"? What is more important in prayer than asking for special favors?

How far does the influence of prayer reach? How does the analogy of the wireless telegraphy help you to understand prayer? What do you think of the plan of the War Time League of Intercession? How does united prayer help to marshal the moral forces of the universe?

CHAPTER XI

DISCOVERING THE LIFE OF GOOD WILL IS ETERNAL

How the Fire of War Refines Our Faith

It is one of the laws of suffering that it usually refines the human spirit. It is of the nature of responsibility to sober the mind and challenge the will. In the recent years before the war, much of the world was rioting in vaudeville, and a feverish whirl of rapid prosperity, though now those tango days seem long ago, the temper of life is so different. In spite of the debauch of cruelty in middle Europe, we are living already in a better world. Selfishness is being rapidly curtailed. We are learning to regard the needs of others and the higher rights of the state. The man who selfishly shuns Red Cross, Red Triangle, and War Chest movements, and the woman who hoards food and refuses to conserve wheat or sugar or do anything to aid the war, are denounced as "slackers," a term of supreme contempt.

Our crass materialism is giving way to a new idealism, and on a nation-wide scale. The rich man's pampered son is no safer from the draft than the son of the poor widow. All the gold of Wall Street cannot prevent his serving in the ranks, and *never in history was this true before*. The wonder and the glory of it is that there has been such general acquiescence in this righteous fact. It is because the splendid ideals of our Christian President dominate public opinion. Under the stress of noble ideals

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in an unselfish war for freedom and a better world, the whole nation is purifying its life. The war's sacrifices are burning out the dross. Its sudden and grave responsibilities are sobering our life with a holy vision of deep meanings and great realities. Many men are seeing more clearly and feeling more deeply than ever before; and so are achieving a new-found faith in God and the deathless life.

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love.—
I Pet. 1:6-8.

While some superficial Christians with poorly grounded faith have been unsettled by the war, because they could not see the deeper meanings of it, many men have seen in it a new vision for the soul. Like H. G. Wells, the war has revealed to them both the need and the truth of religion. In a recent magazine, such an experience is told by a business man whose prosperous, thoughtless life was shocked into some straight thinking, when his idolized son went to war. Before the war he says his "*one-syllabled religion*," such as it was, might have been thus stated: "Nothing can be proved one way or the other; therefore the best way to do is to put the whole business out of mind. A man who lives straight and does his best in this world can take care of himself here or anywhere."¹

¹ Anonymous writer in *American Magazine*, October, 1917.

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But now this crude, superficial thinking does not satisfy him. He says that when he really began to think, his business and everything else was subordinated to his search for light, until he found it. He read the works of scientists and psychologists, like William James, John Fiske, Sir Oliver Lodge; and he read his long-neglected Bible. "I have turned back to the Bible again, since this war began, turned back after thirty years of wandering." It has brought him out into the clear light of faith.

Thus he states his conviction: "Where I lived before this world, I do not know; where I shall live afterwards I cannot even imagine. But that *I shall live*—and not as a mere colorless spirit but as a personality, as Myself—*of that I feel as sure today as I feel sure of anything in the world.* I do not need to dwell on the joy that came to me with that conviction. There entered into my soul such a peace, such a calmness in the face of any possible contingency, that I felt myself an entirely different man. The thought of my boy was still with me constantly, but not as a source of dread. It was as though I had entrusted him to a great Friend, for the more I thought about God, the more he appeared to me as such."

If a man die, shall he live again? . . .

But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth,

And at last he will stand up upon the earth:

And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed,

Then without my flesh shall I see God;

Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side,

And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger.

—Job 14: 14; 19: 25-27.

"I know this now to be a truth," wrote this business man

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with his war-born faith. "The one-syllabled faith with which I have managed to get through most of my life, a kind of blind obedience to Duty, the faith which I thought was strong enough even to face my own death, has broken down at the thought of the possible death of my boy. In its place *I have today a larger and truer faith*. I wish that I might have had it earlier; I should have been a bigger, more successful, happier man had it come to me at the beginning of my life instead of so close to the end. *Yet, for all my horror of war, I cannot but feel a certain gratitude to the war for having led me to it, even now.*"

Many a Christian father would doubtless testify to an experience like Harry Lauder's. When that big-hearted Scotchman lost his only son in battle, three years ago, all that made it possible to endure the shock and go on bravely with his work, was his strong Scotch faith. He tells us, "While the pain and grief had been blinding my eyes, God had been waiting patiently for the first sharp agony to pass away, and when it did he gently lifted the veil from my eyes and showed me the promised land beyond. I mean that suddenly I realized that I had not seen the last of John, and that we were *sure to meet* in another world. Oh, that I could convey to you the healing balm that that thought was to my soul! I would that I could picture to you the joy of the thought that I was to see my John again at some future date, just as if he had simply gone on a long journey, and was waiting for his mother and me to come to him. And because of the great comfort that my faith in the future life has brought me, I have become humbly thankful that I never mocked the name of God or cast him from me at any period of my life.

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Because I know, I am convinced that he has helped me to bear this great blow by making my conviction that this life is *not the end*, stronger than ever.”²

How Jesus Looked at the Future Life

Jesus looked clear-eyed and confidently into the unseen future. He seemed to be just as sure of life after death as of the next day's sunlight. He took immortality for granted, and referred to it in the most natural possible way, in speaking to his friends.

Our Father, who art in heaven.—Matt. 6:9.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.—Matt. 5:12.

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.—Matt. 6:20, 21.

Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.—Luke 10:20.

There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.—Luke 15:7.

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions [marginal reading—abiding-places]; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.—John 14:1, 2.

Because I live, ye shall live also.—John 14:19.

That to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life.—John 17:2.

² *American Magazine*, January, 1918.

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My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.—John 10: 27, 28.

We look in vain in the teachings of Jesus for any *argument* to prove the truth of the future life. Like an axiom, he simply and grandly assumed it as true. He knew he did not need to argue with those willing to believe it, and it was foolish to argue with those who would not. He evidently agreed with the wise man who said: "The heart has reasons which the reason does not know. It is the heart that feels God, not the reason. The primary truths are not demonstrable, and yet our knowledge of them is none the less certain. Principles are felt, propositions are proved. Truths may be above reason, and yet not contrary to reason."³ That is, it may be impossible to prove mathematical axioms, but it is also needless. To the sane, they are self-evident. Likewise, to the Christ-like, the deathless life is self-evident, and so it was to Jesus. He knew it was true, for he could feel it to be true. With his insight and vision, he could *see* the truth of it. He wished his friends to see this wonderful truth also, but he knew the effective way was not to use cold logic, but simply to *reveal* it to them: to help them to live above the fogs of sin, where they could see his vision.

So Jesus gave his friends his new conception of life and of the value of the human soul, and trusted them then to see the inevitable truth of immortality. He was the first of all great teachers to realize and teach *the priceless value of a single human life*. His parable of The One-

³ Pascal, "Thoughts."

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Hundredth Sheep reveals the heart of God taking infinite pains to save one single wandering soul. His discovery of the value of a child was also a new thing in history. Many of his parables reveal his conviction that this life is just the beginning of an infinite journey, the fitting for an endless life. Should a modern skeptic with honest doubts about the immortal life come to Jesus today with his questions, what would Jesus say? Probably what he said to the skeptic Nicodemus, "You must be born from above." Learn to know and trust your heavenly Father. Strive to live *now* the heavenly life of invincible good will. Then you will not be troubled about the future. The perspective of life will deepen before you, and the vision of the deathless life will grow within your soul. You will come to *feel* it must be true.

The Religion of the New Death

A British army officer is quoted as saying, "I have never seen a single man in the trenches who questioned immortality." Similar testimony has come from many sources. In some wonderful way our soldier boys have come to feel this great truth as many of them never had before. Danger is their daily comrade. Again and again they have looked into the face of Death until it has given them the vision of Life. "I spent many days," says our friend Harry Lauder, "in the trenches, in the rest camps, the hospitals, and in the surrounding towns . . . but the one thing I came away with, above all other impressions, was the conviction that every single one of these men, no matter what manner of lives they had lived before, now possesses a calm, clear conviction that if they

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fall in the thick of the fight, they will pass into the life beyond." "You shall not die," said a Scotch colonel to his regiment the night before the terrible German offensive last March. "If you fall tomorrow in battle, you will not die, *you will only step out into the deathless life!*" This spirit of faith in God's future seems to have been wonderfully contagious. With such a spirit leading them, no wonder they "greet the unseen with a cheer." The writer of an inspiring article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (May, 1918) asserts, "That multitudes of soldiers have met their end not only with serenity, but with a high-hearted gayety, is a fact of overwhelming evidence. This is the highest proof a man can give of *his certainty that soul is more enduring than body.*"

And so we see how the wholesale martyrdom of brave young soldiers of freedom has refined the faith of their comrades like gold tried in the fire. They worship courage. They pray to be able to die without fear. They long to deserve the war crosses they win. They finally see the vision splendid, that the heroic life is too glorious a thing to die; no bullet can stop it, no shrapnel can end it! On and on it must go forever, into the endless vista of God! Their brave comrades who have "Gone West" have but passed through the portal of the Great Adventure. They have not died. Nor have they even gone. These fervent believers in "the New Death" are sure that the heroic spirits of their comrades still hover about the familiar camps and trenches to add their unseen aid to the might of the Great Cause. "The New Death conceives an interrelated universe in which spirits still in the flesh and spirits freed from it may both be associated in some mystic effort toward the future. 'Carry on' is the soldier's

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answer to the enigma of death. . . . That our dead are alive and the same whom we loved, and that they joyously continue the upward march, is the dominating faith of the New Death."⁴

When we recall that our Christianity was originally launched by the triumphant challenge of a young man's death, or rather his victory over death, we wonder if this strong conviction of our knights of the new chivalry is not going to give Christianity itself not only a new lease of life, but actually a new vision of deathless life. "*He still lives!*" was the glad shout of the overjoyed comrades of the Christ. "They still live!" is the challenging cry of our soldiers today, as they feel, with a subtle faith-sense, their dead comrades still with them. This glorious taunting of the Great Enemy with his utter weakness to harm the human spirit, when he merely slays the human body, is a splendid assertion of the Christian faith. After all, there is no death; there is only transition; and the heightened intuitions of the soldiers have revealed to them the heavenly vision.

"That's why we take such chances," said one of these young heroes to Harry Lauder. "Do you think for a moment that if we thought that life held nothing for us but the earthly body we possess, we would fight with such confidence and eagerness? We would not be able to, because we would be doing everything in our power to preserve this life of ours. *But seeing men die as I have seen them, I know better than to disbelieve in a future life.* And because we have no fear of death, every one of us flings himself over the bags and on to the Huns with a fierce, almost savage joy. And because that spirit

⁴ *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1918.

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is sweeping among our men, we are going to win this war. We don't believe it possible that men who go into battle, knowing that they are fighting for a righteous cause, and unafraid of death, can be driven back forever. Some day, at some point, the enemy must weaken, and then we will sweep over the tops and nothing will hold us back. We know it just as surely as we know the sun will rise tomorrow."⁵

But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.—I Cor. 15: 54-57.

A Heaven of Progress and Service

It must be confessed that the traditional ideas which the churches used to teach about heaven were hardly masculine. Or rather, they have not appealed to energetic modern men. As one man frankly puts it, "Even from early boyhood, I have found my chief pleasure in good hard work. To be condemned to eternal idleness in a place where everything was perfect—no battles to fight, no faulty conditions to correct, no evils to overcome—the thought was unendurable. I had rejected this ancestral heaven even before my college days; and having nothing better to put in its place, I ceased to think about

⁵ *American Magazine*, January, 1918.

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heaven at all." There's a flat challenge for us Christians! We must give him "something better to put in its place." Many modern preachers are doing it.

The Bible, of course, does not contain a map or a blueprint of heaven. With subtle wisdom Jesus apparently refrained from giving his opinions in detail on the subject, and no one else knew very much about it. It is well for us as it is. "If it were not so, I would have told you," is the assuring word of the Master that we need not know more at present about the future. The beautiful imagery of the book of Revelation is, of course, not to be taken literally. It should be understood as a series of visions, in describing which the author uses highly figurative language. Some of his passages are marvelously beautiful and thrilling in their spiritual power, but in attempting to describe the world of the spirit in physical and material terms of this world of the flesh and the senses, he attempts the impossible. But of this we may be certain: *Jesus never looked forward to a heaven of eternal idleness!* The Christ who said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," would never be content "just to do nothing forever and ever." His heaven must be a life of service, a life of opportunity and responsibility; and with this we find even the author of Revelation quite in agreement:

And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him.—Rev. 22: 3.
And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations . . . and I will give him the morning star.—Rev. 2: 26, 28.

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"We look forward to the future life," says Dr. Edward I. Bosworth, "not as personal bliss conferred as a reward of merit, not to unalloyed happiness, but rather to a new and larger opportunity to work with others at great enterprises for the common good—enterprises which will present many perplexing problems and lay heavy responsibilities upon us. The truly Christian man, the man fit for immortality, has long found his chief satisfaction in working with other men in all possible ways and at any cost for the common good. . . . Any normal healthy soul must resent the idea that his opportunity to make contribution to the common good should end with death."⁶

In some of his parables Jesus shows most clearly that he believed faithfulness in this world would be rewarded, not by a sinecure of laziness in the future life, but a chance for even harder work of graver responsibility. "Surely the best reward of work well done is more work to do," says President King.

And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. —Matt. 25: 20, 21.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to

⁶ "The Christian Witness in War," p. 12.

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eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.—Matt. 25: 34-36.

Though belief in a personal immortality is vitally essential to one's Christian faith, it is doubtful if, in these strenuous days of world need, and of emphasis upon the social gospel, we shall find our most important motives in worrying, like the sons of Zebedee, 'over our personal opportunities and prerogatives in heaven. Let us content ourselves with this: *Eternal life must mean eternal opportunity for growth and progress. Progress is the will of God and growth is the law of life. A future life of personal relations will offer every opportunity for friendly help and mutual service which friends could need or friendship delight to render.*

The Triumph of a Father's Faith

Jesus Christ taught the world the lasting lesson of the infinite value of a human life. Patriotism teaches us that it is a glorious sacrifice to die for one's country, and that the life of the nation is vastly more precious than the mortal life of a single citizen. Radical socialists and some radical Christians claim that these two statements are inconsistent. They assert that one's country is not worth dying for, that *internationalism* is the great goal, and that the loss of a single human life would be too great a sacrifice for a country to deserve. The crux of this unpatriotic fallacy is very simple. Christians who believe in immortality should quickly see it. Atheistic

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socialists can hardly be expected to. It lies in the simple fact that *physical death does not annihilate the soul*, and that the infinite preciousness of human life, which Jesus taught, does not refer at all to the mortal life of the human body. To the short-sighted man who cannot see light beyond this brief three-score years and ten, a mortal lifetime must seem all-important, for he fancies that that is all there is of life. Atheists must make miserable soldiers, they have to be so cowardly in guarding their little span of time. It is the man who has eternity in his heart who can be generous with his mortal years. It is not mortality, but immortality, which has infinite value. "A man must live" is the stingy defense of the moral coward; but the hero obeys his conscience which tells him he *must be willing to die for his Cause*. Jesus taught the world this both by his glorious example and his perfectly plain precept. To his friend who tempted him to think he need not sacrifice his life to save the world, he retorted:

Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.—Mark 8: 33-35.

In the light of this teaching we see the unpatriotic fallacy of Markham's lines, "I Did Not Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier," which ex-President Roosevelt asserts is as bad as, "I Did Not Raise My Girl To Be a Mother!"

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"O mothers, will you longer give your sons
To feed the awful hunger of the guns?
What is the worth of all these battle drums,
If from the field the loved one never comes?
What all these loud hosannas to the brave,
If all your share is some forgotten grave?"

We may grant the rightness of this appeal in the case of an unrighteous war for an unworthy cause; and still feel its low idealism and sheer selfishness in a crisis like the present, when everything in the world worth living for is at stake. In such a holy cause, even Mr. Markham, with his instinctive loyalty to humanity, should see something worth dying for. The best answer to his selfish lines quoted above is given us by Dr. James L. Hughes, who for over forty years was Superintendent of Schools in Toronto, Canada, and whose son, whom he gave to the cause of freedom, was slain in battle in Belgium. This stinging reply to Markham shows us the triumph of a father's faith.

"God gave my son in trust to me;
Christ died for him, and he should be
A man for Christ. He is his own,
And God's and man's, not mine alone.
He was not mine to 'give.' He gave
Himself that he might help to save
All that a Christian should revere,
All that enlightened men hold dear.

'To feed the guns!' Ah, torpid soul!
Awake, and see life as a whole.
When freedom, honor, justice, right
Were threatened by the despot's might,

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With heart aflame and soul alight,
He bravely went for God to fight
Against base savages whose pride
The laws of God and man defied.

'Forgotten grave!' This selfish plea
Awakes no deep response in me,
For, though his grave I may not see,
My boy will ne'er forgotten be.
My real son can never die;
'Tis but his body that may lie
In foreign land, and I shall keep
Remembrance fond, forever, deep
Within my heart of my true son,
Because of triumphs that he won.
It matters not where anyone
May lie and sleep when work is done.

It matters not where some men live;
If my dear son his life must give,
Hosannas I will sing for him
E'en though my eyes with tears be dim;
And when the war is over, when
His gallant comrades come again,
I'll cheer them as they're marching by,
Rejoicing that they did not die.
And when his vacant place I see,
My heart will bound with joy that he
Was mine so long—my fair young son,
And cheer for him whose work is done."⁷

Getting Fit for Immortality

Life in the training camps of our new National Army is

⁷ Quoted from *The Manufacturers' Record*.

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teaching us what it means to live the hundred per cent life. Nondescript squads of heterogeneous "butchers and bakers and candlestick makers" are fed into the hopper at the receiving station, and in a few strenuous weeks they become soldierly men. Something works a miracle of transformation. The uniform helps somewhat; but the discipline far more. The spirit of utter loyalty, instant obedience, absolute devotion to the cause, helps much. Idealism has displaced selfishness. A sacrificial but rational regime of life has straightened out the kinks and crooks, the slouchiness and awkwardness, the obesity or lankiness of the raw recruit and toned him up physically to a point of marked efficiency. We say he is *physically fit*.

We are also proud of the fact, that, under the impulsion of a Christian public opinion and the leadership of Christian men in both Army and Navy, from the White House down, the mental, moral, and spiritual welfare of our splendid young soldiers is guarded with the same thoroughness and care. We are doing our best to make and keep them fit.

The same sensible philosophy of life is very naturally applied to the wider horizons. Middle life has a habit of sagging. If adolescence is the time of highest idealism, it is a shame for maturity to confess it. If physical fitness declines at thirty-five and health at forty-five, it is a physical disgrace to the race. If mental keenness and alertness and efficiency pass their climax at forty, it is pathetic to see. And then we wonder at the early "dead-line" in both business and professional careers! Religion has a strong message for men, to denounce the vulgarity and waste and sin of an early decadence, and to urge us all to *keep*

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fit for efficient service in this world as long as the Lord will let us.

But life is a splendid unity. The habit of personal fitness reaps its real harvest in the future life, for *it leaves its marks of efficiency upon the soul itself*. It surely tells its story in the facial expression, but it also moulds the character. We cannot avoid the fact that our training, all our world education and experience, is for the endless life. *We must get fit for immortality*. If the life of the human soul is eternal, it is the height of folly to live a butterfly life, just for today. Religion is far-sightedness. Faith is perspective. Spiritual culture is common sense for the soul, which needs careful training and nurture for its long, long road, infinitely more than the body needs it for its short journey. We must be true to ourselves, body and soul, by keeping fit; not for selfish satisfactions, but for efficient usefulness and the joy of service.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. . . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.—Rev. 2: 10, 11.

That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work—II Tim. 3: 17.

Put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.—Eph. 4: 24.

Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—Eph. 4: 13.

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The Daily Practice of the Deathless Life

Somewhere Dr. Washington Gladden says, "If you live the sort of life that ought to perish, it will be hard for you to believe in immortality; but live the kind of life that ought to last, and belief in the endless life will not be difficult." The great adjective *eternal* seems to be qualitative as well as quantitative. It refers not merely to time, but to the quality and nature of life. Otherwise, it would suggest mere lengthiness; and lengthy means long without being interesting. It is the *glorious content* which immortality may hold that allures us, not simply its interminable length. That content we must put in ourselves, with God's help. Some folks' religious aim seems to be the meager one of ultimately just reaching heaven. Their spiritual ambition is satisfied if they barely get across the Jordan with fare enough to pay the ferryman. To enter heaven thus morally and spiritually bankrupt would be the last possible calamity. It would amount to hell itself. When a man awakes to the fact that he *must begin to make his heaven now*, and that eternal life begins here and now, if ever, in the quality of one's present living, he makes a great discovery. "You can never enter heaven, until heaven enters you." The people whose faith in the endless life is the strongest are those who get the habit of immortality. They are practicing it daily with the help of Christ. It is the life of invincible good will, which even death cannot conquer.

These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.—I John 5:13.

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Dr. Edward I. Bosworth says to our soldiers, "The man who is bearing his Christian witness in war by the daily practice of immortality has seen reason for expecting that this instinctive demand of his soul will be met. If death comes today he will not be without rewarding occupation tomorrow. . . . We see in the future life a challenge to do our utmost in the day's work now. . . . Our chance to take an immortal man's part in the great unselfish enterprise of the life to come depends upon having learned to take a man's part in all such enterprises here and now. The man who has flinched from his chance to work for the common good here, whether in war or peace, has had that fact registered in his own personality by the very laws of his own being. He steps through the gateway of death into the Beyond, labeled an unfit man who has not yet passed his apprenticeship and who cannot yet take his place with the strong friendly workmen in the larger civilization of the vast unseen world."⁸

It gives a new grandeur to the life of today when we see in it such eternal meanings. *The man who feels endless life within him and shows by his daily practice of good will that eternity is in his heart, treads this earth like the son of a King.* His heart is not feverishly selfish in exploiting the present nor anxiously burdened for fear of the future. He has such confidence in the life of good will that he believes it endless; so he tries to live as if life were eternal, and then trusts God to make it true. "Death is a great adventure," says Dr. Fosdick, "but none need go unconvinced that there is an issue to it. The man of faith may face it as Columbus faced his first voyage from the shores of Spain. What lies across

⁸ "The Christian Witness in War," p. 13.

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the sea, he cannot tell; his special expectations all may be mistaken; but his insight into the clear meanings of present facts may persuade him beyond doubt that the sea has another shore."⁹

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

How is war sacrifice actually making the world better? What effect has the war had upon your faith?

What was Jesus' attitude toward the future life? Why didn't he argue about it? How does the quality of our present living affect our belief in the future?

What is there about the war experience which makes the future life so real to the soldiers? What do you think of "the religion of the new death"? Why do the soldiers feel that their heroic comrades have conquered death? Are believers in immortality braver fighters than atheists are?

What is a modern man's idea of heaven? Does "eternal rest" have any attraction for you? Why is the possibility of progress necessary for us in the future life? Why are you sure it will be a life of service? What does the parable of the talents indicate on this point?

How can middle-aged men "keep fit"? What causes the professional "dead-line"? How does personal efficiency reap its harvest in the future life? How can we "get fit" for immortality? Show how religion is spiritual far-sightedness.

Is it a high enough aim to try to "just get into heaven"? In what sense is it true that heaven must begin now in the quality of our present living? What do we mean by "the daily practice of immortality"?

⁹ "The Assurance of Immortality," p. 116.

CHAPTER XII

THE ESSENTIALS OF A SOLDIERLY FAITH

Reducing Religion to Its Prime Factors

The religion of Jesus was as simple as sunlight. The religion of the centuries has been more and more complex. Men who talk the language of theology are all too likely to complicate Jesus' religion with their own ideas about it; so historic Christianity becomes heavy with dogma and very confusing. Elaborate creedal theories, fantastic forms of worship and even weird mystical experiences have so complicated the religion of Jesus that Peter and John would hardly recognize it. Many men in our own age have reacted against this overgrown faith and have been pleading for the simple religion of our Lord. When confronted and almost smothered by the elaborate religion of the Pharisees, Jesus, with keen analysis, cut through the non-essentials and reduced religion to its prime factors. He set up as a standard of simplicity the simple sincere trust of a child, and made childlikeness the test of membership in his kingdom:

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little

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children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 18:

I-4.

A simple faith was always beautiful, but it was never more needed than today. Our creeds and forms and rituals must become simple again or lose their grip on men. Our military age has discovered waste to be a crime. To harbor the needless and the useless is now a breach of patriotism. The soldier must carry no superfluous baggage, even in his faith. With the keen vision of wits sharpened by crises, the soldier pierces through the rubbish of cant and formal non-essentials. He finds the few great essentials, and throws all the rest into the discard as not worth while, at least upon the march. For many a soldier there comes a time when, in his great loneliness, nothing much counts but God and Christ and immortality; but these great certainties grip him with the strength and joy of a new discovery. He has reduced religion to its prime factors. He has analyzed religion and found just a few splendid irreducible elements in the retort of his soldier's experience. He has found the "everlasting reality of religion" in the Gospel of the Incarnation.

So it always is when some deep experience sets our life in new perspective. Many things which used to be interesting and absorbing now seem very petty. We wonder how they ever took our time, they are so unimportant. And other factors loom large and commanding, all out of proportion to our former neglect of them. So

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it must be with the modern man's faith. In these days of double tasks and of straight thinking, the fancy little notions which cause sectarian disputes, the selfish preferences adhered to merely for denominational comfort, which have rent asunder the Church of Christ, must be thrown to the winds. It is a blessed fact that in all the great essentials of the religion of Jesus, most of the Protestant churches are in substantial agreement. These great essentials are the prime factors of the faith, and the rest, the points of difference among us, matter very little, as we very well know.

The Danger of Leaving Out God

The test of a religious life is whether or not one leaves God out. If a man tries to live his life without God, he is simply a pagan. If you are trying to live a Christian life with God's help, you are living a religious life, however imperfect it may be. "A man of somewhat doubtful mind listened with a good deal of impatience while an eloquent preacher was speaking about the war. The address was an inspiring interpretation of God's relation to the great conflict. At its close the impatient man sought out the preacher and addressed him rather gruffly: 'I suppose you must talk about the war,' he said, 'but don't you think you ought to leave God out of it?' The preacher looked at him steadily for a moment. Then he said, 'When you leave God out of *anything*, you are no longer a Christian.'"¹

It has been impossible for thinking Christians to leave God out of this war. They are deeply concerned to know

¹ Wilson, "Marshalling the Forces of Patriotism," p. 45.

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what part he is playing in the great conflict and what his will concerning it shall be. As the above author suggests, "The mind and heart and conscience of the whole world are reaching out through the clouds and darkness and storm to find the Master of Life. A new hunger for knowledge of God has gone out through all the earth." He was right, *we cannot leave God out of anything*, if we are followers of Jesus. We must reckon with him everywhere and always, for he is no mere tribal God or local patron saint. He is the God of all our lives.

The classic illustration in the Old Testament of the man who dared to leave out God, is Jonah, the slacker-prophet who tried to dodge duty and escape from God:

Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.

But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god; and they cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it unto them. But Jonah was gone down into the innermost parts of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call

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upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. . . . Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, What is this that thou hast done? For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of Jehovah, because he had told them.—Jonah 1: 1-6, 10.

The strange blindness of Jonah in thinking he could evade God's selective draft by getting out of Palestine was no more foolish than the shortsightedness of men to-day who fancy they can live their lives and leave God out of the reckoning, the God whose infinite power radiates throughout all creation and sustains all life through natural law.

Religion Which Stands the High Test

Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for
his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence
of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with oil;
My cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow
me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for
ever.

—Psalm 23.

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At first thought this beautiful, peaceful, Shepherd Psalm does not seem appropriate to our turbulent times. It recalls the quieter days before the war. Yet its middle section speaks of the shepherd's protection in danger, of comfort in evil times, and the strength of faith in "the valley of the shadow." After all, its real message is the triumphant testing of a vigorous faith in the stress of things, rather than the passive experience of a soft and easy life. The heart of the Psalm is the throbbing note of joyful trust, "*I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.*" Just as the presence of the shepherd is the protection of the sheep, so God's presence neutralizes evil and makes it harmless. When a man makes God the shepherd of his life, he truly has a religion which will not fail in the high test.

American manhood, with nine generations of Christian faith in this country to lean upon, ought to stand the moral and spiritual tension of the times. Yet in the soul-testings which war sacrifices have already forced upon us, many a man's faith has gone tottering; and with ever lengthening casualty lists from the front, the worst for many of us is still to come. The fathers and older brothers at home need a religion which will hold in war-time, fully as acutely as the boys in the trenches need it. In these swift days when all things are becoming new, even the eternal Gospel needs to be simplified and put in vital, compact terms of current life. A Shadow-God of unreality will do no longer. We must find a real Comrade God, a God in life. Let us make certain that there is a gospel for us in the Good News of God. Let us make sure that our personal religion is a faith which can stand the high test. Perhaps that supreme test may come

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for you sooner than you think. Within this very year it will surely come to tens of thousands of American homes.

If this test of your faith should come to you, as it came three years ago to Harry Lauder, that canny Scot of the bonny, friendly heart, God grant that your religious life may stand the test as grandly and victoriously as his. What a noble testimony to the Christian faith his life confession makes! We quote a single paragraph: "From the state of glorious, proud parenthood to the utter loneliness of one without a son, have I come in the last two years. When the Germans killed my only son, Captain John Lauder, on the 28th of December, 1915, they killed every spark of ambition that was burning in my breast. The things I have personally had to bear since then have been almost too much for the strength of any one man. I firmly believe that were it not for the simple fact that during the hours of greatest agony and trial I have clung to my God and to my strong faith in a future life, I would not have been able to survive. My God has always been with me and has helped me in my hour of trouble."²

It is the glory of the religion of Jesus Christ that it can meet victoriously such a test as this and bring a man through, in triumph and in quiet confidence for the future.

The Good News of God in Life

This book is not an argument, it is only the sharing of a vision. The kingdom of heaven cometh not with debating; it comes through insight, by way of the inner

² *The American Magazine*, January, 1918.

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vision. "Come and see" were the simple words of the Master. This book would make the same appeal to thoughtful men. How profoundly true are these words of a mystic quoted by William James, "I perceived also, in a way never to be forgotten, *the excess of what we see over what we can demonstrate*"! Axioms demand no proof. The great realities of life are deeper than mathematical demonstration. The logical demonstration of God and immortality, wrought out through years of toil and study, leaves our hearts still cold; but these great truths, revealed in spiritual experience, are suddenly *felt* to be true. We know the truth because we feel it, and no argument can wrest the sense of reality from us. Of course in this scientific age, one cannot honestly ask reasonable men to accept anything which is not reasonable. We must have exactly the same respect for *a fact* in religion as in science. Yet the modern man's faith should gain in clarity, warmth, vitality, and driving power by generating the dynamic of religious feeling in the deeper moments of religious experience. There is a sane mysticism which should redeem our modern faith from barren rationalism.

The unity in the message of this book must be evident even to the casual reader. It is simply an attempt to interpret the religion of the Incarnation, the good news of God-in-Life. In our quest for the great realities in Christian experience, we discovered the presence of God in life, unobtrusive but vital, especially in crisis times; we discovered clearly God's leadership in human history, as well as his help in personal experience; we discovered him immanent in nature and revealing his orderly life in natural law. We next discovered the divine life in Jesus

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Christ. We noted how the suffering world today is finding the Christ through comradeship in sacrifice. We saw heroism transfiguring men and helping them to understand the Christ. We found through Christ a clearer sense of the personal God, the Father God. We found God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, while Jesus died to make men good. We learned of Christ's power to save men from sin and its death grip, evil habit; and we sought for the moral energy through which Christ saves, as he challenges the best in men. Again we discovered God in the Bible. We found it to be a book of life, which grew in a natural way out of the life struggles of inspired prophets and discerning seers, who reveal to us not only their first-hand touch with God, but God's method with men, his method of making men who can wield his power. We next discovered the Comrade God in the life of the Christian. We found prayer to be our natural way to God, and the channel through which spiritual energy is released with a world-wide reach. And finally we discovered that the daily practice of the deathless life makes the life of good will eternal. Life with God within does not die.

Such is the religion of the Incarnation, the Gospel of God-in-Life. It is thus we find the living, creating, redeeming God in all phases of the throbbing life of his great world, just as Moses found his eloquent presence in nature, and Elijah in the life of the spirit; just as Isaiah felt him to be present in the temple worship and Saul of Tarsus in his daily struggle. If religion is the life of God in the souls of men, there is enough of the vital presence of God throbbing in all our universe to transform it into his glorious Heaven, that flawless life

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of friendly comrades of the Christ. We find in the vision which came to young Isaiah, as he worshiped in the Temple, both an example of God's method of making a prophet in the ancient days and his challenge to us today to incarnate his Spirit and be men of consecrated life and holy purpose. It was this vision which led Isaiah into his great life service as the statesman-prophet of Israel. May we also catch the accent of God's call to a worthwhile service of our world!

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.—Isa. 6: 1-8.

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What the Soldier Expects of the Church

"What Will the Soldier Expect of the Church?" was the subject of a vigorous sermon in a Boston church last winter. Herein is a double challenge, the demands which the returning soldier will make of the Church after the war is won, and the soldier's challenge to churchmen to-day. Thousands of older men in the home churches are feeling this latter as a challenge to renew their faith. They know that the boys in the trenches, who are fighting our battles for us, have good right to expect us not only to keep the "home fires burning," but also to keep our *altar fires* burning. For their sakes we must undergird our religion. We must look well to the foundations of our faith. We must rediscover God and be on better terms with him, on speaking terms with him in daily prayer. We must not only fortify our hearts to stand heroically the shocks which the future losses of the war may bring us; but we must also guarantee the boys over there that a bulwark of prayer is a part of the unfailing service which the Christian homeguard is giving them in the churches and homes of the dear homeland.

Speaking of just this challenge to the men at home to renew their faith, an English private soldier wrote to his friends earlier in the war: "The soldiers carry their burden with little help from you. When men work in the presence of death, they cannot be satisfied with conventional justifications of a sacrifice which seems to the poor weakness of our flesh intolerable. They hunger for an assurance which is absolute, for a revelation of the spirit as poignant and unmistakable as the weariness of their suffering bodies. To most of us it must come

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from you or not at all. For an army must not live by munitions alone, but also by fellowship in a moral idea or purpose. And *that, unless you renew your faith, you cannot give us.* You cannot give it to us because you do not possess it."³

This challenge of the soldiers to their half-religious fathers and older brothers at home has not failed to reach its mark. The idealism in the flashing eyes and illumined faces of thousands of our white cross knights in the army of humanity has stirred to unwonted emotion the heart of many a man left at the home base. The service button proudly worn by many a father, sometimes with its double or triple stars, is a constant reminder to the wearer that somehow the boys' life of discipline and devotion must be shared. It has brought a new consecration to many a man whose religion had become perfunctory and cold, as a deepened earnestness in many a men's Bible class in the home churches will testify. Men in America are feeling the urge of the religious impulses and the sacredness of the religious sentiments as they never have before, for their lives are running in deeper channels.

Unquestionably when the great Army and Navy of the United States shall complete its task and be demobilized, another challenge will come to the Church. History has never seen the like of that vast home-coming. Already in a single year's experience the boys from America have learned much. They are rapidly gaining a capacity for wielding power and exercising leadership and influence which will count heavily when, several millions strong, they return to control the next two generations of our

³ Gilbert Murray, "Faith, War, and Policy," p. 245.

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country's active life, politically, industrially, socially—yes, morally. With developed ideals of disciplined efficiency, they will challenge every institution among us. They will measure by soldierly standards our schools and colleges, our city politics, our business methods, our public health and sanitation, our recreation, our social customs, and, with equal frankness, our institutions of religion. Our churches must prepare to pass their examination for efficiency, or they will turn our flank with a tide of indifference which will leave us hopelessly in the rear, while an era of progress sweeps by.

We must not go into details as to this coming challenge of the Church, save with great brevity. It has been frequently noted that the sectarian weakness of the churches will receive from the soldiers the sharp challenge it richly deserves. In cantonments, army posts, and on the battleships the boys are finding church union practical and universal. They are forgetting their sectarian differences. They are developing real sympathy with men of other faiths. They will come back too broad and fraternal in their views to fit into the narrow grooves of denominational rivalry which they knew before the war. If we would enlist and serve the soldier boys after the war, we must unite our divided forces, especially in small communities where church divisions are most scandalous and fatal to the cause of Christ. And, as one of our religious leaders with the Army in France expresses it, "The religion of the churches must be one of *function*, not merely of creed, if it is to win the returning soldiers." It must be a religion which transforms character and shines forth unmistakably in the personal life; and it must be a social religion which seeks unselfishly to serve and

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redeem its community. It has always been true that a useful church does not die. The soldiers' challenge to the Church will doubtless be to make itself *useful*, efficient in doing good, in accordance with the inaugural program which Jesus himself announced early in his ministry.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings
to the poor:

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,

And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him.—Luke 4: 16-20.

Cooperation Among Christian Forces

The symbol of the Red Triangle has won world-wide fame and is everywhere understood. It represents to our soldier boys the Christian spirit of loving, sacrificial service, made good in every conceivable way in which they need it. It guarantees to the mothers in America that,

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so far as it is physically possible, their soldier boys shall have within their reach at least a substitute for home and something of its protection, its comforts, and its friendly care. At the end of an illuminating description of the Y M C A work in France with our troops, Dr. Joseph H. Odell writes, "Who can help asking himself: What is this Y M C A which teaches Bible classes, conducts mass singing, follows the boys everywhere with little luxuries, superintends athletics, leads men into the treasure-house of art, provides educational facilities, plays banker to hundreds of thousands of men, establishes business enterprises on the drop of the hat, fathers and mothers a million of homesick men, acts as a circulating library, keeps the dear bonds of love firm by providing a million soldiers with the facilities for writing home, preaches to them, prays with them, plays with them, suffers with them, and does it all in the name of the One who taught the law of human service—what is this Y M C A? At present I cannot answer the question; my head whirls with the things I have seen, such dissimilar and divergent things, and wrought out upon a scale that is fairly staggering. America will have to answer the question, the whole world will, for it is something we have never seen before, and it marks an epoch of spiritual significance just as startling as the Crusades, the Franciscan movement, the Reformation, or the rise of Puritanism. It holds within itself potentialities sufficient to cause the mightiest reactions and readjustments of thought and emotion, and from this time onward the Christian world must move in new channels."⁴

⁴ *The Outlook*, Sept. 13, 1918, p. 95.

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Certainly the Red Triangle work has won the unstinted appreciation of the boys in khaki. To many of them, boys from remote villages in western and southern states, this Y M C A hut work is the first example of social Christianity they have ever known, and it is a revelation to them. Sometimes they are inclined to welcome it as a substitute for the Church. In fact one is quoted as saying, "The Cross is the symbol of an outworn creed; but the Red Triangle represents the highest form of service." We quote this merely to challenge it at once, as false to the spirit and purpose of the Association war work. That is never intended to antagonize the Church or the Church's cross. Whether visible or not, *the Cross is always in the Red Triangle*, as sacrificial Christian service; and the chaplains and the Red Triangle men are said to work usually in essential harmony. The same writer quoted above tells us: "At this base hospital I found the Army chaplain and the Y M C A secretary occupying a room together. They came from different parts of the country, they had inherited widely different ecclesiastical traditions, had been trained in different kinds of theology, represented different denominations, and were of manifestly different temperaments; but in that one generous ministry to the wounded men they had been bathed in an obliterating sympathy, and they agreed that when they returned to America they hoped to be co-ministers of the same church for the rest of their lives. Only the vitally essential things count out here."⁵

Religion and the Red Triangle must never be separated. Both the Church and the Christian Association

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

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must continue to serve men with the unstinted devotion of Paul, expressed in these words:

I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker thereof.—I Cor. 9:22, 23.

A Comrade World for the Comrade God

And he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.—Acts 17:26.

Ours will never be a comrade world until men find the Comrade God. The Father God makes the whole world kin. The Great Comrade will in time make the world fraternal. It is the end of ancient history, and we are to see a new world. It must be a comrade world; but it is not yet. The two long battle lines are still at death grips. The giant struggle, between the clashing ideals of Christianity and paganism, humanity versus materialism, altruism versus selfishness, and Odin versus Christ, is still indecisive at this writing. It has involved all the world except the interior of dark continents immune to world movements; but God is in the struggle, and a new world, redeemed through this enormous vicarious sacrifice, is surely to come out of it.

Somehow brotherhood must come into our world-neighborhood, and the prophecy of Joseph Cook be fulfilled: "The nineteenth century made the world a neighborhood; the twentieth century will make it a brotherhood." How truly the world has become a neighborhood is well described by Dr. Fosdick: "The basic reason for

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this war's appalling extent and terrific character is that it is waged in a world of increasingly intimate relationships. The ends of the earth have been crowded together as man has conquered distance with his swift inventions. The points of contact between nations and races have been indefinitely multiplied. More than once the telegraph stations around the world have been aligned for a message that made the swift circuit of the globe. Such a message left Oyster Bay one night when Mr. Roosevelt was President. . . . (It went around the world in nine minutes!) A fellowship of life so close and intimate has followed in the wake of these new means of communication that we need not be surprised to learn that when war was begun in Europe, food prices in Siam went up 100 per cent.⁶

At Cornell University one finds a massive stone seat, cut from a single block of granite, the gift of an honored professor of history, Goldwin Smith. On this stone seat we find the motto carved in bold relief, "Above All Nations is Humanity." Just now in the heat of war this motto is less favored than it will be by and by; yet the bare fact that two-thirds of mankind are banded together in solemn compact to establish freedom and justice in the earth, at any cost in blood and treasure, is a mighty portent of progress. Even at the height of this most awful war in history, the future was never brighter for human brotherhood. With twenty-three nations sworn to mutual defense and in cordial agreement that wars of aggression must forever end, we have the actual beginnings of the longed-for League of Nations which in the future shall

⁶ Fosdick, "The Challenge of the Present Crisis," p. 10.

ESSENTIALS OF A SOLDIERLY FAITH

enforce peace. The era of reconstruction will be long and wearisome, even after the victory comes for which the world is praying; but it must be governed by Christian principles, which will heal the fearful wounds of war in such a way as to safeguard the permanence of peace. With the unique opportunity to lead in the rebuilding of a nobler world, which already confronts our country, Lowell's splendid lines seem more timely than ever in the past,

"Our country has a gospel of her own
To preach and practice before all the world,
The freedom and divinity of man,
The glorious claims of human brotherhood."

SUGGESTIVE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

In what ways does the religion of Jesus seem simpler to you than that of some modern churches? Why do you like a simple creed better than a complicated one? What important points of faith would you call the prime factors of religion? Do most churches agree on these essentials?

What is the danger when we try to leave God out of our lives? What great discovery did Jonah make? What high tests must religion be able to stand in these war times? In what ways has your faith felt the strain of it all? What practical help have you found in the gospel of God-in-life?

How do you think the soldiers are challenging the Church today? After the war is won, what do you think the returning soldiers will expect of the Church? How should your community adjust its church work to meet this challenge? What effect do you think the Red Triangle work will have on the future work of the Church?

FINDING THE COMRADE GOD

Will this war result in more or less suspicion and jealousy among the nations? Will the Entente Alliance continue as a League to Enforce Peace? What signs can you see of increasing brotherhood in the "world neighborhood"? How can America help to make this world a Comrade World?

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